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C O U N T Y S O C I E T Y.

A NOVEL

"Vérité sans peur."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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COUNTY SOCIETY.

CHAPTER I.

THE HIGH SHERIFF OF CLAYSHIRE AT HOME.

THE morning after the scene recorded in the last chapter, Mr. Evelyn, senior, sat at breakfast, sipping his coffee, when the postman's knock resounded through the passage.

"Let me go," said Lilla, flying off to the door, her brothers being arrested midway by their father's voice. "One is enough ; sit down, boys."

"Here's one from Evy !" said Lilla, holding it up. All the business letters were, in her eyes, of no importance compared to this one of her brother's.

Mr. Evelyn, as he laid the bundle down on the table, took them up one by one, turning each over to discover from the outside whom they were from, all of which trouble might have been saved by breaking the seal, but then the pleasure of conjecturing who the writers were would be lost. At last he came to his son's.

"Do see what he says, dear papa," said Lilla.

"Patience, my darling, patience," said the old gentleman, who was endeavouring to assume great coolness; although the dear old man was, if anything, more anxious than his children to know the contents of the letter, and they saw with perfect clearness through his little artifice. "So much for railways; this was dated in London yesterday. See here, Bob, is the name of the Tavistock Hotel on the seal," which he still deferred breaking, enjoying a species of mild self-torture all the time.

"Oh, do read it, dear," Lilla said, imploringly.

Her father looked up, smilingly, and did as he was requested.

"When is he coming home?" all three children asked in a volley.

"To-night," was the reply.

"I am so glad," said Lilla.

"I wonder will he bring me any present?" said Bob.

"And me?" echoed his brother.

"For shame, boys (Lilla always called her brothers boys, as if she were an old lady compared to them), how can you be so greedy?"

Accordingly, when the bus was due from the Express, in the evening, Mr. Evelyn and his three children stood on guard in the windows.

"Here it comes," said George.

"No, stupid, that's a van," said Bob.

"Do not call your brother names; I will not permit it;" and at the authoritative voice of his father, Bob relapsed into silence, for a time at least.

The family were not kept much longer in suspense. In a few minutes the unmistakeable vehicle, with its spavined, broken-kneed horses, turned the corner of the street, and pulled up at the door for Eveleyn to descend. He had hardly got beyond the threshold when Lilla jumped into his arms, exclaiming, "I am so glad to see you, Evy!" Then the boys rushed up to shake hands; while at the parlour-door his father met him with his kindly "Welcome, my son!" giving his hand a hearty squeeze.

"How are you, my boy?"

"Quite well, thank you. How are you, father?"

"Very well, for an old man. I suppose you are starving. Have you got anything for him to eat, Lilla?"

"Oh, yes; there's some soup, and a mutton chop, with his tea."

"That will do nicely," said her brother.

Then followed the usual string of questions and answers. Friends were inquired after on both sides; the traveller asking after those at home—the family after those in the great town and its neighbourhood; with a hundred other inquiries respecting all the particulars of home life, interesting to none but those who are concerned.

Having got through the overture successfully, and the tea-things having made their appearance, Eveleyn sat down to satisfy the cravings of nature; stopping, though, between every other mouthful, either to ask or answer some question. Knowing the impatience of

the children, the next duty was to unpack his trunk, he receiving an amount of unsolicited aid that rather embarrassed than facilitated the operation. The brown paper parcels made their appearance at last, and each received some token of his affection.

Descending to the dining-room, where his father sat, he gave him a small volume.

"What is it?" said the old gentleman.

"The first-proof copy of my poems," was the reply.

The only thanks he received was a look, but that repaid him more than words could have done; for the souls of the father and son were knit together in bonds of love that time cannot destroy, but which eternity will cement.

Mr. Evelyn, senior, was a great admirer of poetry, and in his young days he too had been guilty of versifying—at least so his son had heard, and the father never contradicted the story—although not a trace of his poetic efforts remained, every line having been burnt years ago, nobody knew exactly when, save he who had destroyed them. It was with feelings, then, of no ordinary pride that he opened the volume, although the twilight did not permit him to decipher the letter-press.

"What do the reviews say about it, Evelyn?"

"It is early days yet," replied the young author; "the book has only been out a week. Yet I am happy to say that two favourable notices have appeared—one in the 'Athenæum,' and the other in the 'Morning Chronicle.'"

"Bravo!" exclaimed the father, "you will yet wear the laurel crown;" and then added, as a more business-like thought came over him, "It is a very poor profession; it will hardly get you bread and cheese."

"I do not write from mercenary motives, but in obedience to the feeling which bids me take up my pen."

"That is the true spirit of an author, my boy. It must come upon you like a revelation, otherwise you may spoil paper till doomsday, and never effect anything more."

It was not usual for those of the last generation, who held the doctrines of the Society of Friends, to store their minds with general literature; and Mr. Evelyn's ancestors, for generations, had been members of that body of Christians. He himself, from having married a lady of the Church of England persuasion, was, in accordance with the rules of the society, disowned, as Friends do not permit any of their members to marry those of a different creed; should, however, they persist in doing so, they are read out. In his youth Mr. Evelyn had been sent to the great Friends' School at Akworth, where the children of members were adorned with leather breeches and a quaint coat, and received a very limited education at a very small cost.

Mr. Evelyn used often to tell a story of a visit his uncle paid the establishment, for the purpose of seeing him, after he had been resident there three years, during which time his limbs had grown, though his clothes had not,—his legs, or rather his thighs, were clad in

the same habiliments that had been first given him ; the leather, through time and use, having attained a fine polish, though woefully deficient in length, and his arms, projecting through the short sleeves of his coat, were for several inches uncovered ; while a thick shock of hair, untrimmed for months, gave the boy the air of a young savage.

" Things are changed now," Mr. Evelyn used to say ; " but in those sad years of war, how we used to scald our throats to get a second helping of pudding, ' first done ' being ' first served,' and there was never enough to go round twice. When my uncle saw me he did not know me ; but I was not sorry for that, as it made such an impression on him that he brought me home without more ado.

" Reading, writing, and ciphering formed the staple of our education ; and as for poetry, why, Milton was a forbidden book. My brother, though, had given me a copy, and I used to read it when I was unobserved, sometimes in my bedroom, sometimes when the boys were at play. In those days I could repeat the four first books, and a large portion of the remainder. I do not know what I should have done without it ; it satisfied a craving in my heart that nothing else during those dreary years supplied."

From these schoolday recollections the conversation changed to the discussion of matters having a practical bearing on everyday life.

" I suppose no corn has been cut yet," said Evelyn.

" No," replied his father, " I have heard of none ;

though some of the forward patches will most likely be ready this week."

"And how are the turnips looking?" was the next question.

"To tell you the truth, I have not been able to get as far as the farm during your absence. Watts says they can't be better; not a plant missing."

And in this way father and son canvassed their affairs, until the latter was fully informed of the condition of all the different branches of the business, the mill and the farm.

"Speaking of the mill," said Mr. Evelyn, "reminds me that you must see Mr. Salmon to-morrow about the renewal of the lease. You know that the last life is gone now that Mrs. Jones is dead, and there is little more than four years of the term to run. Ever since he (Salmon) came of age have I been endeavouring to come to terms with him, but he is a most impracticable man to deal with. It really weighs on my mind sometimes. However, you must see him to-morrow; perhaps you will prove a more successful diplomatist than I have been."

Lilla now came in, saying—

"You haven't heard my new song, Evy."

So, although that young gentleman had lately enjoyed some good music in London, which it was not likely his sister's efforts would surpass, yet he cheerfully went to listen to half-a-dozen ballads sung in the usual schoolroom style; after which performance the songstress returned to the dining-room, to engage her

father in the battle-field of the backgammon board, while Eveleyn read the letters that had arrived for him during his absence.

Then came the supper-tray—bread and milk for the boys, bread and cheese for Eveleyn, and cake, which Lilla joined her father in partaking of; while the latter also mixed a glass of whisky toddy, which he generally indulged in at night.

The next morning, after breakfast, Eveleyn, having made an examination of the condition of the farm, started off on foot for Oakland Hall, the seat of Mr. Salmon; and as the road presents little attractions to the lover of scenery, we will precede our young friend, and make the acquaintance of Mr. Ethelbert Edgar Salmon, High Sheriff for the county of Clayshire, Deputy-Lieutenant, but not J.P., for, although in the commission, no one could ever induce him to qualify; for which refusal he never adduced any reason beyond that he disliked the trouble that magisterial duties would ensure him.

Mr. E. E. Salmon was a gentleman at this period of time about thirty years of age, an only son, and the proprietor of a small estate, the rent-roll of which reached from eight hundred to a thousand a year, and which, by the provisions of his father's will, he had only come into the full possession of on the completion of his twenty-eighth year. In person he was in reality tall, being only one inch short of six feet; but unless an observer had the opportunity of comparing his stature with that of a bystander (so immensely

stout was he), he would call him a short man—unless he saw him seated, when the immense length of his body, which was completely out of proportion to his limbs, caused him, in this posture, to tower over the heads of every one. Legs he certainly possessed, but in shape they were more like short bodies knit together with joints than any limb that fancy ever designed; and it must be added that they, as well as his arms, were strong in proportion to their circumference, and enabled him, despite his unwieldy figure, to take an immense amount of exercise, which he did both from inclination and as a corrective of his unfortunate obesity. A bull head with a bull neck, set upon a pair of bull's shoulders, completely harmonized with the rest of his frame. But, on the other hand, his features were so small that they seemed lost in that acre of flesh, his face—where two grey sentinel eyes peeped out from two valleys of fat, towards which a small nose turned up, while (considering it apart) a really pretty mouth occasionally showed a strong set of teeth, of which the incisors were peculiarly large. If we add that his hair was flaxen in colour, clipped short, and inclined to grey already, the reader will have a pretty accurate idea of what personal gifts Mr. Salmon had to thank nature for—who, in addition to her other attractions, had given him a low soft voice, superadding a lisp.

The rest of Mr. Salmon's family consisted of his wife, a bouncing country girl six years previously, but now rapidly changing into a coarse woman; his mother, old Mrs. Salmon, as she was called, and Miss

Hester Salmon, a good-looking creature of six-and-twenty.

Between these four Oakland Hall was divided in equal proportions, the hall being in common; the mother and daughter occupying one wing, the son and his wife the other. This was the arrangement made in old Salmon's will; and as the jointure of the one and the inheritance of the other would have been imperilled had either given up the whole house to the other, therefore, despite family jars (which, by the way, of all crockery are the most enduring), the quartet found shelter beneath the same roof.

The reader should also know a little of the antecedents of the Salmon family; and as it is not required nowadays (provided you have money) to prove more than the existence of your grandfather, leaving his parentage, in common with the Greek and Roman myths, to the doubts essential to the pre-historic age—we, in this instance, will not travel back farther into the past than to the time of Mr. Salmon's father's father. This old gentleman kept a shop, a small chemist's shop, in a small town; in which, by attention, perseverance, and parsimony, he managed to scrape a few thousand pounds, which he lent at interest on mortgage here and there, on land, and, in some cases, houses; anywhere, in fact, where five per cent. could be had on good security. The chance also of being able at some time to foreclose was always an inducement to Mr. Salmon to comply with the wishes of a client. Mr. Salmon, moreover, had a brother in the



East Indies, who, having a like family affection for sterling gold, succeeded in squeezing out of that happy country sundry lacs of rupees, which, being unable to take them with him to the far-off land, the old chemist in England became possessed of, thereby swelling his riches in no small degree.

From this time, however, the old man, like many a true Christian, became very poor in spirit, and could scarcely afford himself the necessaries of life, much less wear decent clothes. An old woman had picked up a corpse on the sea-shore, and becoming possessed of the dead man's clothes, she eventually succeeded in selling the trousers to Mr. Salmon for half-a-crown, and the little difference in the size of his body and the former owner's, which caused the garment to be too small for its purchaser, suggested a very ingenious arrangement of twine loops, by which the deficiency in girth was nicely compensated for.

By dint of continued saving, the old man had the pleasing satisfaction of knowing that his fortune was rapidly increasing ; although his extreme reluctance to the expenditure of money caused him to postpone the repairs of the staircase in his own house until the old lady, his wife, fell through, and was suspended by the tenter hooks underneath, where the hebdomadal leg of mutton was usually hung. Her husband, in consequence of this accident, had to pay two considerable bills, one for medical attendance on Mrs. Salmon, and another for a new staircase ; whereby his feelings were quite as much wounded as the afore-mentioned lady's,

and he inwardly wished that she had been converted into dried salmon before that unlucky day, as then she would have been in her right place on the hooks ; which fishy compliment he more than once paid the partner of his joys.

This dear old man was the happy parent of two sons, who cordially hated each other, and only agreed in their filial sentiments, which were identical with their fraternal, and which scarcely measured the reciprocal feeling of their father. Many were the left-handed prayers the dear boys put up for the safety of the beloved author of their being ; and, if the old gentleman could have screwed up courage to make a will, it is more than probable that a Benjamin's portion would not have fallen to either of his sons. However, the mother having, as John said, been politely introduced to Hooky Walker, the same old gentleman made Mr. Salmon's acquaintance, and the brothers divided eighty thousand pounds between them.

John, the eldest, took to gambling, and certain innocent kindred amusements, whereby his days proved as short-lived as his wealth. But James, the younger, having taken to himself a wife, left behind him Oakland Hall, a small estate, a comfortable jointure for his widow, and an ample portion for his daughter.

Mr. E. E. Salmon, whose acquaintance we have made, was not a refined man, a man of letters, or a man of taste. Indeed, rumour's scandalous tongue asserted that he could scarcely write his own name. This was, doubtless, untrue ; but one fact remained,

namely, Mr. Salmon's autograph was as scarce as Pharaoh Necho's. His predilections had all a sporting tendency, and he excelled as a shot, also as a hunter of rats. His size ought to have precluded him from riding, but during the past season he kept a pack of harriers, and by appearing at the meet in the morning, and rushing along the roads all day, he deluded himself with the notion that he hunted them. During the summer he generally found the time hang heavy, especially since his marriage, and, although he played cricket with his own men, and boxed with his gardener, the long days dragged on wearily, until one morning he took it into his head that he would like to dig stones for building ; and accordingly he opened a quarry, for convenience sake, a hundred yards from the hall door, in which he spent many hours very pleasantly ; and in the course of one season, succeeded in raising, by his own exertions, nearly enough stones to build a pyramid. He afterwards considered this to have been one of the happiest years of his life. Society he hated, and invariably ran away and hid himself whenever any visitor approached, so that it was by no means easy to find him at home ; but those persons who knew his habits pounced on him in one or other of his haunts, and if they drew the quarry blank, they immediately tried the piggery.

An hour's walk brought Eveleyn to the lodge gate, and there the first evidence of the peculiar character of the proprietor made itself apparent, where recklessness, carelessness, and parsimony—however antithetical the

first and last—were nevertheless displayed. The late Mr. Salmon had rather grand notions ; he found Oaklands little more than a farm house, he left it a country mansion. He planted trees, thinned plantations, cut avenues, laid out grounds, and improved the approaches. His son seemed determined to learn from experiment how soon time would undo all that his father accomplished, and he had reason to congratulate himself on the changes that were already manifest. The octagon lodge, once nicely stuccoed, where the blind windows looked like real ones, was let to a stone-mason. His children had proved the brittle nature of glass, the place of which sundry articles of Manchester manufacture supplied ; and these not being transparent, and frequently resorted to, had the effect of excluding so many sunbeams, that a dim painter's light pervaded the two little apartments, where eight souls of different sexes found accommodation, and partially concealed the undue proportion of dirt and dust that rendered the interior as clean as an Irish cabin. The ill-natured frost had removed a good deal of the outside plastering, as if it wished to gratify a feeling of curiosity as to the material with which the building was constructed. The mason was also an engraver of headstones, several of which graced the front of his house, and peeped over the garden wall, where the stranger could read as he passed, "Sacred to the memory of—" or, "Here lie the remains——." Eveleyn smiled as he passed through the wreck of the gate that hung from the only remaining hinge, and filled up the blanks in his own

mind—"Sacred to the memory of departed pride;" or, "Here lie the remains of Mr. Salmon's gentility;" and lifting off his hat as he reached the shadow of the trees, he walked slowly on, considering how he could best open the attack on his eccentric landlord. Suddenly a smart blow on the face, and a sharp prick, made him start back. He felt the blood trickling over his cheek, and looking up, saw that he had run against one of the many thorn branches which projected on either side nearly a third of the distance across the road; the hedge from which they proceeded not having been trimmed for years. Inwardly anathematizing the slovenly owner, he, with more regard for comfort and appearance, carefully walked in the middle of the avenue, until he got within sight of the house.

"I wonder where I shall find him?" soliloquized Eveleyn. "If I call at the house, they will certainly say he is out; and if he is told that I am here, he will lock himself up in the garden, and my excursion will be a fruitless one."

While he was thus cogitating, he heard a very unusual noise in the direction of the kennel. The hounds were baying with unwonted energy, and men's voices in a very loud and excited key could be distinctly heard.

"What can he be doing? I am sure I hear his voice," thought Eveleyn; and quickening his pace, he proceeded in the direction of the sound.

Leaving the house on his left, he entered a road bounded on either side by splendid laurels. This was

the entrance to the stable yard, and in an enclosure beyond this stood the kennel.

Louder and louder became the din. The hounds yelled in a most extraordinary manner, different from any note he had ever heard out of a dog's throat. Oaths, exclamations, hoarse laughter, all together, made an uproar such as is generally supposed the Plutonic dominions can alone produce. Eveleyn was thus prepared to witness some strange scene, but his wildest imaginations never pictured anything so brutal as the spectacle which met his gaze on entering the kennel yard.

Two sides of the enclosure were occupied by cow-sheds, the third by a granary, and the fourth was devoted to the hounds. In the centre was a large heap of litter trodden into a compact mass. On this lay the dead bodies of a dozen dogs, their heads beaten in. Around the door of the kennel stood four or five men and boys, neither of whose faces betrayed the least compunction; one of them held the door ajar, leaving a space sufficiently wide for the body of a hound to pass through by a little squeezing. Guarding this aperture stood Salmon himself with an uplifted axe, his shirt-sleeves tucked up to his arm-pits, his gaiters spattered with blood, his face streaming with perspiration, a look of devilish gratification in his eye, and a malicious smile curling his lip.

"Now, Thim," he said (he lisped at all times, but especially when excited), "what the devil are you tho long about?" (speaking to some one inside).

"Can't get 'em to bolt, sir," was the answer.

"Put the whip on 'em, then!" rejoined his master.

Crack! crack! then a hideous yell, and a victim dashed through the door. Smash down came the axe, and the beast fell dead without a struggle: a second followed, and met the like fate.

"D—n you, Tom! be quick; pull the carrion out of the way."

The man stooped to obey his master's orders, and quitting his hold of the door, it flew open. The remainder of the pack rushed forward; vainly Jim from the inside attempted to prevent their exit, the hounds sprang through the aperture, and circled round the yard at speed, their owner bringing down one as they flew past him, by what he called "a d—d good flying shot."

"You bl—— fool," said Tom's master to him, "thee what you have done!"

Thrice the dogs made the circuit of the enclosure, and then simultaneously rushing on to the heap of litter, they scented their dead companions, and gave forth a howl so loud, so piteous, that even some of the men had tears in their eyes.

All this passed in a moment of time, before even Eveleyn could interfere. Indeed, so absorbed were the whole party of butchers, that no one had noticed him. So sick that he could scarcely stand, he now came forward. Salmon, seeing him, muttered an inward curse, and flung the axe out of his hand, shouting, "Quick, boyth; get the dogth back!" and went forward to meet his visitor.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Eveleyn, "what in the world does all this mean, Mr. Salmon?"

"Oh, nothing," said that gentleman, "I'm only getting rid of the pack."

"Why kill them then?"

"Because I cannot get my prithe for them!"

"Would it not be better to sell them for half-price, or even give them away, than to destroy them?"

"If I thold them too cheap," said Salmon, "they'd laugh about me."

"Then why not give them away?"

"Ah, wouldn't you like it!" was the courteous rejoinder.

Knowing the impracticable character of the man, Eveleyn gave up the subject, and turned to another theme. The great difficulty he had to encounter in dealing with his landlord, was his incorrigible piggish disposition. Whatever direction he was required to go in, it was always necessary to pull him in the opposite path. Possessing intellectual powers of a very low order, nature had endowed him with a large share of cunning, and never acting in a straightforward manner himself, he, judging every person by his own standard, always suspected the integrity of those with whom he came in contact in business. The result was that his exceeding shrewdness recoiled on himself, and he invariably was the victim of his own suspicions. If a miller offered him a liberal price for his wheat, he never could be induced to sell the grain, lest the purchaser should have a bargain, but stored it in his granary,

until, with the rats and neglect, it became hardly fit food for pigs. He possessed a fine garden, which produced him loads of fruit, more than he could use; he seldom gave any away, and although his pride would not hinder him from selling the surplus, he rarely could be induced to do so, because his saleswoman might cheat him, and the value of pounds sterling was allowed annually to rot, from the fear that he might be swindled out of a few shillings.

"How are the horses looking?" said Eveleyn.

"You shall thee them," said Salmon, and they entered the stables.

There, were four magnificent creatures, two in loose boxes, and two in stalls, and, to do their owner justice, nothing was wanted in this department of his establishment. The building was well drained, ventilated, roomy, and perfectly clean, not a straw out of its place, not a brush or comb lying about. Stepping up to the first, a bright bay filly, Salmon stripped off the clothing, and with an air of justifiable pride, said, "What do you think of her?"

"A perfect picture," said Eveleyn. "Magnificent forehead, well ribbed up, and strong in the loin, one of the nicest bits of horse-flesh in Clayshire."

"Tho the ith," said her master.

"Jim is a good groom," observed Eveleyn parenthetically. "Is the mare going for the Oaks next year?"

"I don't know," said Salmon, unable to give a

straightforward answer, though in his own mind he had determined the point affirmatively months ago. Having paid their respects to the filly, they performed the like ceremony with the other horses, which, without flattery, Eveleyn could speak of in the highest terms of admiration.

Then came a long colloquy on training, feeding, &c.

"I alwayth feed my hortheth mythelf," said Salmon.

"Do you?"

"Alwayth! Look, here ith the key of the corn chetht, nobody handleth my oath but mythelf."

"That must give you a great deal of trouble," said Eveleyn, "in the winter particularly."

"No," said Salmon, "I'm alwayth in the thableth at five, all the year round, and that ith thoon enough to feed the hortheth."

This point settled, they inspected the prize oxen that were to be exhibited at the Christmas Show. And when they had been surveyed, the new corn drill was visited and commented upon.

Meanwhile, Eveleyn was watching some suitable opportunity to enter upon business. Salmon, however, half suspecting the cause of his tenant's visit, determined to evade the subject, and, if possible, escape it altogether.

Hating the idea of manœuvring, Eveleyn at the same time felt how useless it would be to go straight to the point at once, so he commenced.

"We caught two very good salmon in the pool

below the weir last week ; I desired the men to send you one."

"O yeth, thank you," said his companion, "it wath a very good fith;" and then aside, "I exthpect he wanth to catch another now, but he'll find hith mith-take."

"We intend to open the sluice this year a month earlier than usual, so as to let the fish run up, without waiting for a flood."

"Who payth you?" said his landlord.

"Nobody," said Eveleyn. "I like a day's salmon fishing, as well as any one, and if the old ones are not allowed to spawn, the sport would soon come to an end."

"Are you very buthy at the mill now?"

This was a nice opening!

"We are doing a fair share of business, but there are many improvements in machinery now-a-days, which we have not got, therefore we cannot do the amount of work we should otherwise accomplish, and there are some descriptions of paper, such as fine glazed letter paper, which we have not facilities for making. However, if we succeed in selling our interest in the premises, the purchaser must make these changes."

"Thell the mill!" exclaimed Salmon.

This was a very unpalatable idea, as the Evelyns were good tenants, always paid their rent to the day, and although he had deferred granting a renewal of the lease, it was simply a diplomatic scheme to make better terms for himself, and he had not the least notion of getting in a stranger if he could avoid it.

"I thought that your father wanted a renewal of the leathe—at any rate, he hath athked me to name my termth repeatedly."

"Yes," said Eveleyn, "so I have heard him say; but as I dislike the business excessively myself (this was quite true), I should prefer our capital to be otherwise employed." Then suddenly changing the theme—

"Did you see the cricket match between the All England and Twenty-two of Bricklinton last week? I hear our men played very well!"

"No, I did not," replied Salmon; "weren't you there?"

"No, I was in town!"

"Ah, enjoying yourthelf I thuppothe," said Salmon, with a leer in his eye.

"Very little enjoyment had I," said Eveleyn; "my only recreation was an evening or two at the Opera and the Olympic."

"And Extheter Hall," interrupted his companion with a knowing wink. "I wath young onthe. Ha! ha!" giving Eveleyn a punch in the ribs.

"So I imagine," said Eveleyn drily.

"What a humbug," thought Salmon to himself; believing in the impossibility of purity, he always classed those who would not confess to debauchery as consummate hypocrites; not that he despised them—on the contrary, if, as he supposed, they deceived the public into the belief of their correctness, he admired them for the duplicity which he credited them with.

Finding he could not entrap Eveleyn into any con-

fession, he reverted to the subject of the mill, and thrown off his guard by Eveleyn's apparent indifference, he said, "But suppothe if the leathe wath renewed, what would you do?"

"In that case," said Eveleyn, "the value of the property would be increased, and we should be able to sell it easier."

"Then," said Salmon, "I'll take care not to give a renewal."

"Very well," said Eveleyn smiling, "we must do the best we can without one,—Good morning, sir."

"Good morning,—but thtay," said Salmon. "If I give you an exthtention of the leathe, will you remain at the mill?"

"Am I to understand this as an offer on your part?"

"You may if you like!"

"Shall I then say to my father, that provided he is willing to continue to work the mill, you are prepared, on fair terms, to grant him a renewal of his lease?"

"Yesth, you may!"

"Very well then, I accept it as a promise from you accordingly—Good morning."

"Good morning."

"D——n it," said Salmon, as he turned towards the house, "I believe tith the renewal of the leathe the old boy wanth after all! Never mind, I haven't put my hand to paper. I'll thee what Ben thayth."

Ben, a blacksmith by trade, was his factotum and privy-councillor, with whom he consulted on all matters, even if he took his own way afterwards.

CHAPTER II.

SELF-COMMUNION.

EVELEYN on his return related the result of his visit to his father ; suppressing the incident of the hounds, the whole of which were subsequently killed.

“ You have succeeded quite as well as I expected,” said the old gentleman ; “ Salmon is a very queer creature ; I can only account for his very extraordinary conduct by supposing that he is not at all times a responsible being. After dinner,” he continued, “ go down to the mill—I have not been able to be there to-day—and all men require looking after.”

Accordingly, at three o'clock, Eveleyn might have been seen walking in the direction of the old buildings ; but it was with a very heedless and indifferent air he passed from room to room, addressing a stray observation to a leading hand ; and having satisfied himself that everything was going on properly, with a volume of Byron in his pocket, he sauntered out to the river bank, and up beside the stream to the weir, where the

water, falling over some five feet of masonry, formed a miniature cascade—then rushing round the sides of the large pool, into which it fell, it finally swept onward into a long flat reach, where it seemed to rest, as if weary with its unusual exertion in the region of the mill-dam. Up and down, backwards and forwards, Eveleyn paced along the banks mechanically, now watching the foam at the foot of the fall, now following dreamily the course of the stream, where it almost stagnated in the meadows below. “How like my little life!” he thought. “A few days ago I made my grand plunge, if not full of hope, at least boldly; and here I am now, sweeping round the pool beneath, as if I had no further course to follow, and only waited for the earth to yawn and swallow me. But the earth does not open, and the stream must proceed, though no longer bright and sparkling, all enthusiasm at an end, and for the future dull, slow, sluggish, until it becomes at length the main drain for the town; and polluted and polluting, pursues the destiny which awaits it in the sea beyond—oblivion! Would to God I had never been born!” was the first idea that flashed across his mind.

“Fool,” was the reply, “to cavil at the inevitable!”

“Perhaps,” said he to himself, “Kate Howard’s refusal of me was predestined too?”

Quickly came the answer, “If it was, what happiness is there in the reflection? If it was not, will the fancy that it might have been otherwise afford me any satisfaction?”

"But to be married to the man I hate!"

"Would not you hate anyone whom she preferred to you?"

"Do not suffer your existence to be sacrificed to the memory of a lost love; you are capable of better things. Arise and work!"

"Am I suffering from a moral palsy, that these words should apply to me? Do I not work? Every evening, when the billiard-room is full, and the whist club holds its meetings, am I not engaged in study? When the town-clock strikes two, morning after morning, is my task ever accomplished?"

Mere "dilletantism" was the answer—"literary dissipation, nothing more. Now a novel, now history, and now philosophy—but no system, no method, no order—ill-directed efforts resulting in the acquisition of the most superficial knowledge. Verily, Eveleyn, there is no greatness in you."

"Too true," he said aloud, as if he were conversing with another. "Yet," he continued, "I will be great!"

"Wherefore?"

"I cannot tell, except for the sake of greatness. But success would now be robbed of all its pleasure, since the great hope of my life is denied me. In entering the lists against the world, she was the queen of love and beauty, whose glance would have nerved my arm. Then, had I fallen, it would have been in her sight, and for her sake, and that would have contented me. All this dream has passed away; the light of my life is set. Young as I am, I have entered upon

the dim twilight ; I feel the chill creeping over me. My inmost nature is changed ; I am grown old in experience, weary from disappointment, longing for rest. Fool that I am ! Is this girl's love more to me than hope, ambition, and success ? Weighed in the balance of truth, will it not be found wanting when compared with these ? Undoubtedly ! Then if the less be lost, let me not mourn—the greater may be mine."

For some time he had been standing on the edge of the river ; now he turned and resumed his walk, building fairy castles, but ever and anon the master-thought returned, and, as it were, angrily expelled all intruders, usurping undisturbed possession of the mind. Bitter though the recollection was, her memory was the treasure he held dearest to his soul.

Let not the sceptic laugh at this. Such love is a prize to be coveted ; it purifies the heart with efficacy second only to God's grace. No soul capable of such a love but is worthy of being loved. Shallow affections, like shallow rivers, sparkle and look brightest to the eye ; but when the great drought comes, and men turn to them to be refreshed, naught but the dry stone-bed remains ; the stream that was expected to cool is dried up. Not so, the deep still waters that have glided along in silence and seeming coldness—they fail not in the hour of trial ; quiet and unobtrusive, their lack of demonstrativeness might have been mistaken for apathy—but their placidity proves to be the garb of faithfulness and truth.

These were the first hours that he could call his own

since his return. It was very natural, then, that he should review the past, and now, from the point he had reached, scan as much of the future as he could discern. He had completed one cycle; it was rounded in that scene in the park. He had now entered upon another, for all our lives are epitomes of larger histories, marked, in like manner, by epochs and eras. Individuals, like peoples, are acted upon by external causes, and are moved by the operation of laws, or perhaps one great law, which rules the rest, permitting to us, perhaps, less freedom than would satisfy our self-esteem, could we correctly ascertain its limits.

Next to the idle man, in point of misfortune, is he who works without an aim. In vain for him the sun rises and sets. Nothing marks his labour; there is no end to his fruitless toil. Hope is never his companion; faith never descends to comfort him; whether he is eventually dashed upon the rocks, or floated into harbour, it matters not, he is indifferent to either fate.

Eveleyn felt this truth in all its poignancy, for although he had never been sanguine of success in the prosecution of his love-suit, still, while any uncertainty remained, he could always console himself with the reflection that more extraordinary matches had been made. "I will," thought he, "relinquish study, consign my books to the care of the spiders, give up all frivolous amusements, and, as a man of business, devote myself to money-making." Then the vision of the inevitable drudgery rose vividly before him, and under its influence he saw his mind contracting, his heart shrivelling

up, his reading useless, his higher nature paralyzed by an insane attempt to sacrifice every feeling of kindness, generosity, and love to money-getting. "I will," said he to himself, "abandon this idea, and take up painting." This fancy he negatived at once when he reflected how completely the little powers he possessed were enfeebled by disuse, and what a mountain of labour must be overcome before he could even attain to a decent proficiency. "No mediocrity for me! Respectability may pass in morals, but is worse in art or literature than decided failure. Oh! my poor father," he said, half aloud, "how little you knew the mind of your son! and how little you understood the means by which his happiness might be best secured, when you yielded to his solicitations to take him from the sphere of intellectual labour to a life of agricultural monotony! And yet I cannot blame you—for even now, with earnestness of purpose, I might learn all that the wise deem worthy to be known in any department of inquiry. I will read, not only read but study, philosophy as it is presented by experience as well as in books. I will again strive to win a poet's name, and I will banish from my thoughts Kate Howard's memory." He turned his face homewards, but by some very ingenious piece of mental contrivance, he had not taken fifty steps when the old theme again occupied every cranny of his mind.

Entering his father's house, he found the dining-room empty. Proceeding to the other sitting-room, he found the old gentleman occupying a chair in the bay window in the back drawing-room, so placed that

the last rays of the setting sun fell upon the letter he was reading, while a favourite cat sat purring on his knee. He did not at first perceive the entrance of his son, but on putting down the letter, he said—

“Is that you, Eveleyn?”

“Yes, father.”

“I have just heard from Evan Edwards that Jane Woolmar and Sarah Everett intend paying us a religious visit, and that the dear Friends will be here by the express to-morrow evening; and you must meet them at the station.”

“Are they going to hold a public meeting?” asked Eveleyn.

“No. Jane Woolmar is engaged in visiting all the families of Friends in the united kingdom, and it is not within the scope of her present service to extend her work beyond the pale of the Society, and to those who are in any way connected with it.”

CHAPTER III.

A VISIT FROM FRIENDS.

THE general reader is not, perhaps, aware of the customs that prevail among those who are commonly denominated Quakers, more especially as to their manner of performing the duties of the ministry.

Believing, as they do, that every word they speak, when they meet for worship, is given them to say by the direct influence of the Holy Ghost, they hold secular education to form no part of the preparation for the ministry, and that the most ignorant and illiterate persons are equally at liberty to address a congregation. Moreover, believing that their preachers are simply the mouth-pieces of the Spirit, they consider that old and young, men and women, are all, or either of them, equally likely to be selected for this office. But once a minister, always a minister, is no dogma of theirs; and the ablest and most powerful preachers may feel it as incumbent on them to keep silence at one time as to speak at another. Thus they never pre-

pare their discourses, nor do they know an hour beforehand on what theme they shall be engaged.

It frequently happens that individuals believe themselves called upon to visit, in a ministerial capacity, certain districts or countries. When this idea becomes deeply impressed on their minds, they, to use their own expression, state to the Elders of their respective meetings that they have a concern to visit such or such places or people. These propositions to travel in the apostolic manner are generally favourably entertained; then the applicants are liberated for that particular service, and are furnished with certificates accordingly. Generally speaking, the minister is accompanied by a companion, and frequently two or three ministers travel together. Every Friend's house is open to them, where they are hospitably entertained; and when the special service is completed, they return their certificates to the meeting from which they were granted. Should they be in needy circumstances, their bare expenses would be paid them; but all those who can afford it are at their own charges.

If the truth must be confessed, Eveleyn regarded this visit as a bore. He had no objection, like many others, to set aside one day in seven for religious purposes, but he felt it irksome when called upon to give up another in the middle of the week to dance attendance on a pair of old ladies, who, however sweet, would be, he was persuaded, frightfully dull. From the experience he had had a year ago, it was not surprising that this announcement did not throw him into

raptures. At the time referred to, an American Friend had paid them a visit. This old gentleman, who had received his education in the Back Woods, considered it a point of religion to be as brusque as possible, and utterly regardless of the usages of society. He spat, used his tooth-pick, spoke with a frightful nasal twang; considered America the model for the universe; never said, Thank you or Please. If asked to take soup, he replied: 'Don't use soup!' Or wine, or beer: "I don't liquor!" He wore black clothes, lay down on the bed after dinner, never washed, unless dipping a towel in water and damping his mouth and fingers can be considered as the lavatory process; and when he preached, he always quoted the same hymn. With this picture before his eye, he anticipated no pleasure from the society of Jane Woolmar and her companion, other than the pleasure of showing attention to those whom his father esteemed.

Not so Mr. Evelyn. Though not a member of the Society, still he was thoroughly a Friend at heart; and cut off, as he had been for years, from any large meeting of his co-religionists (for Bricklinton meetings had dwindled down to less than half-a-dozen members), it was the greatest treat that could be afforded him to sit under the ministry of one of the persuasion in which he had been educated. Though the pleasure in itself was doubtless considerable, yet it was rendered far more so from the association of ideas. On these occasions arose before him all the delicious memories of a happy boyhood. Again he saw his

old greyheaded grandfather, the head of the meeting in his native town, sitting motionless, his legs crossed, one arm thrown over his chest, supporting the elbow of the other, while his chin rested upon his thumb and finger. Often had he watched the tear roll down the old man's cheek, and almost heard it fall in the deep silence that prevailed. There, too, was his father—black-haired and black-eyed, whose serious look ever and anon was turned to the benches where the children sat, to see if they kept order. And on the other side was his calm, sweet-looking, beautiful mother—beautiful in spite of the ugliness of her dress. Then the low musical voice of the female preacher stole on his ear again, in fancy, as she gave forth her message of love.

All this passed away, and the burial ground met his gaze, where the white-thorn blossomed, and the large holly-trees were always so green, and the poplar leaves rustled in the wind. Beneath were arranged in rows the unpretending green grave-mounds, unmarked with stone or slab—for the old Friends never looked for the resurrection of the body, but were content to be present with the Lord in whatever body he clothes the spirit; and so that their frame had decent burial, they cared for no post-mortem distinctions, and scorned all unveracious epitaphs. Dust unto dust! The soul to Him who gave it! .

All that was left of the past generations of his family known to him, and of whom, those that he knew could speak, were buried there; there, too, he hoped to

rest, for the place was dear to him from old associations, and because of the precious dust it held. This scene vanished, and was replaced by the quiet country home, the walls of which upheld no picture save a print of William Penn's treaty with the Indians. The book-case only contained, after the Bible, the Journal and Life of George Fox, Barclay's Apology, the biographies of several Friends, the Life and Times of Thomas Scattergood, a few volumes of Travel, and two or three of History. There was no instrument of music in that house; no dancing at yule; no cards; no wine. Yet it was a cheerful dwelling; truth abounded; there was no display, no loud and angry words, no ebullition of temper, no blows. Loud, uproarious laughter was unknown, yet cheerfulness always, and gentle mirth at times, prevailed. There was his mother's unruffled serenity and unbounded love. There was his father's frank, honest face, and frequent smile, and kindly word. There he received his first lessons, which taught him to prefer good to evil, and, even in those early days, enabled him to see the beauty of holiness, and abhor the sinfulness of sin. If the voice of singing never thrilled through those primitive rooms, the voice of wisdom was ever sounding there, and the peace of God abounded.

These were very pleasant memories, and no wonder that Mr. Evelyn should gladly look forward to a visit from those who were thus the means of re-uniting him to those old scenes; and many and particular were the orders he gave to Williams to see that everything was

provided for the comfort of the Friends. We fear he thought more of a hearty welcome and a liberal provision of all the good things of the season than of maintaining the testimony of extreme plainness in diet. He knew that even Friends are human, and that good mutton, fat poultry, and fresh fruit are as acceptable to them as others; and we fancy that, could dear, honest George Fox put his feet under the mahogany of many of those who adopt his quaint costume and plain speech, he would be fearfully scandalized.

The appointed evening came, and Eveleyn, having engaged a fly, stood on the platform, ready to receive his father's visitors.

"Here she comes!" shouts a countryman.

The white steam rises above the cutting, the bell rings, and the iron steed rushes up to the platform. The door of a first-class carriage is opened by a gloved hand, and a little lady, with a thick veil drawn tight down over her coal-scuttle bonnet, and well wrapped up in a warm shawl, although it was only the month of August, stepped carefully on the platform.

"Take care, dear friend," said a voice, proceeding from the depths of a similar head-covering; and, minus the veil, another lady, of larger figure, dressed almost in precisely the same manner, followed her companion.

"Will you be kind enough to point out your luggage?" said Eveleyn, "and I will take it in charge for you."

The ladies looked up.

"My name is Eveleyn," he said.

"Oh, thank thee," said both ladies; "it is so kind of thee! We did not look for this."

The luggage was given to a porter; and, offering an arm to each lady, he escorted them to the fly.

"And how is thy father?" asked Jane Woolmar.

"Thee must not talk in the evening air," said her companion; and, turning to Eveleyn, continued: "Our friend has a cold, and it is better for her not to speak much in the open air."

"I suppose I must obey," said Jane Woolmar, in a very gentle voice.

"Yes, thee must; thee art in my care now, and I am responsible for thee to thy family," said Sarah Everett, a smile brightening over her broad, plain, honest face.

Half-a-dozen sentences were sufficient to re-assure Eveleyn that his companions were ladies.

The fly drew up; Mr. Evelyn stood at the front door; descending the steps, he grasped the hands of both of his visitors, at once greeting them warmly.

"Jane Woolmar?" he said, turning instinctively to her. "I thought so."

And seeing them safe out of the carriage, he led the way, with the lady he had addressed on his arm (the ministering friend always takes precedence), and Eveleyn escorted her companion.

In half an hour the friends were seated at the tea-table. On Mr. Evelyn's right sat Jane Woolmar. She was a widow lady fully seventy years of age. Her grey hair, which was still evidently abundant, though but little of it was shown, was drawn off her face below

the temple, and concealed under a high-crowned cambric cap. In her youth she had undoubtedly been pretty, and her face still retained the bright complexion that distinguished her as a belle in the Philadelphia yearly meeting, though time had dimmed its freshness. In figure she was slight, almost diminutive. Her dress was composed of brown silk, plain body, with a band round the waist; the sleeves, comfortably loose, fastened tight at the wrist. Over her shoulders she wore a plain white silk handkerchief, pinned in the corner at the back, and neatly crossed in front, where it was secured in like manner. She displayed no ribbon or ornament; her gold watch, kept in her pocket, was attached to a black silk guard. Her companion was similarly attired. She was a younger woman, and unmarried. Common sense had told her that her large fortune was quite as likely to attract the men Friends as her plain face, and therefore she declined all offers to change her name.

Lilla presided at the tea-tray, and the boys were paying particular attention to the good things before them.

"Is this all thy family, friend?" said Jane Woolmar.

"Yes; all!"

"And what is thy profession?" she said, turning to Eveleyn.

"I farm, and assist my father at the mill."

"Farming," she replied, "is a very agreeable occupation. My father had a large farm where a town

stands now. What pleasure we had when, as children, we used to stay there, watching the various operations, gathering wild-flowers and fruit, riding bare-backed on the old pony ! It was called Cranbury Hollow ; and large stores are built where I have seen the maize grow. Such are the changes incidental to a young country. But here you move on much slower. It is true your large towns grow, but ours seem to spring up."

"Hast thou been in this country before?" said Mr. Evelyn.

"Oh ! yes, I came over here first, five years ago, with my dear husband. He was to have been my companion in this work in which I am engaged ; but before we had been in England six months he felt so strong a desire to return, that we recrossed the Atlantic."

"And you have left him behind this time?" said Eveleyn.

"No," she said, "he left me !" Then added meekly, "He is dead !"

There was a short pause. Mr. Evelyn broke the silence.

"How long hast thou been in England this time?"

"Nearly three years," was her answer.

"Then thou hast travelled much?"

"Yes. It was my original intention to visit every family of Friends in the United Kingdom ; and my work has so far prospered, that in a few months I shall accomplish my design, if I am spared for the service. Very, very sweet has been my labour. Some few

families have declined to see me, but they are the exception. Generally I have experienced the greatest kindness, and have been much comforted to think that I have not been altogether vainly employed. Great vessels require deep water; but I, like a little boat or canoe, can push my way where the larger ship could not go. So I hope I have reached, and still have to reach, some simple hearts, to whom my message of love will be acceptable."

After this the conversation became more general, and Eveleyn was surprised when he heard the clock strike ten. Then the large Bible was placed before his father, from which he read a chapter, the servants being present; after which, as is the custom among Friends, they all relapsed into a deep silence, which lasted for a few minutes. Having partaken of some slight refreshment by way of supper, the visitors retired for the night.

Eleven next morning was the time appointed for the meeting. Punctually at that hour all were in their places, the whole congregation, including children, only amounting to ten persons. Jane Woolmar and Sarah Everett sat in the gallery, where also Mr. Evelyn took his place.

The little chapel was a plain, oblong building, originally built to contain some two hundred persons. It was wainscoted all round with unpainted deal; across the upper end ran a low gallery, where the ministers and elders generally sat. The area was filled with plain benches, ranged in rows on each side, leaving a

passage up the centre; the right side being appropriated to men, the left to women. All the woodwork was of deal, and every part of the building was scrupulously clean and neat.

“As still as a Quaker’s meeting” has passed into a proverb; but the world, that laughs to scorn the experiences of the devout, knows little of the peace that prevails in the hearts of the worshippers who thus approach their Maker, not only in outward stillness, but in the deep stillness of the soul, in reverence and in godly fear, for they feel themselves to be in the presence of the “I Am.” That worldly thoughts intrude, and rise as a cloud, dimming the beatific vision, is, alas! too often the case, especially with the naturally frivolous and young; yet even with these there are moments when a solemn awe steals over them, and the peace of God fills every heart.

Eveleyn, constant in his attendance at meeting, felt himself almost a hypocrite as he sat, ostensibly for the purpose of self-communion and spiritual worship, while anything but religion occupied his mind; not that he gave himself up without a struggle to these mundane reflections; and often and again he felt that “it was good for him to be here”—but if his opinion had been asked, he would have replied that the system of conducting public worship in the Society presupposed goodness and purity. “It is based,” he would have said, “on the idea that every person within the walls is a sincere Christian, or desirous of becoming one—that every member of the congregation is familiar

with the Bible, and needs no instruction in the history or morality of the Gospel. For the pure in heart and sincere in mind, who have made the life of Christ their study, and endeavoured to follow in his footsteps, it is well suited, and such, doubtless, do not require the teaching of men, for the Spirit Himself is their instructor; but for the careless, the indifferent, the formalist, and the hypocrite, who need that the senses be first addressed, and the intellect chained, by the imagery, truthfulness, and dialectic skill of the preacher, there is no provision. It was a service more adapted for simply spiritual beings than for creatures compounded of the material and immaterial, in whom the influence of the former predominates. This Eveleyn had experienced himself, and had often come to the conclusion that for a torpid soul, such as he felt his to be, the audible voice of prayer, the rolling symphony of the organ, and the vivid oratory of the preacher were better adapted.

Nevertheless, he liked to attend meeting, whether from sentiment or conviction he could hardly tell; but had he been called to give up the church or the chapel, he would not have hesitated to relinquish the former.

The little congregation were all seated; not a sound disturbed the meeting. The Great Searcher of hearts knew what was within them. As far as the human eye could reach, each was endeavouring to hold communion with his God. They had been seated nearly twenty minutes, when Jane Woolmar rose slowly, and advancing to the front, grasped the rail of the gallery with her left hand, her right being raised and extended a little

way forward, as if she were motioning to keep silence, that they might more clearly hear the message which she was about to deliver. Her eyes, though open, were evidently directed to no earthly object, until she began, in a low, musical tone—

“While we have been sitting together, these words of our blessed Lord have been brought to my mind: ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’”

It should be observed that the whole of her discourse was marked by frequent pauses; sometimes her utterance was rapid, then very slow, just as she felt the words were given to her; at times she spoke in her natural voice, then she broke into a falsetto, and half sang many sentences. She continued: “Dear friends, how sweetly consoling are these words! what joyous reflections do they give rise to! Christ, the Captain of our salvation, has promised never to desert His followers. As the pillar of cloud by day, and as the fire by night, led the Israelites on their journey, so Jesus is ever with those that love Him, shielding them from evil, saving them from unknown dangers, soothing them in trials, and conducting them, in His own good time, to the haven of everlasting rest. Is He the Companion, dear friends, of each of you? Oh, ask yourselves this question, and I will tell you how to answer it! Do you love the frivolities of the world? Are your minds given up to ambition, pride, hate, vanity? Do you find the duties of public and private worship irksome? Do you shun the society of the good and devoted disciples of the Lord? Is it your highest aim to advance

your position in life? Do the cares of your possessions cumber your souls? Do you value the praise of men, or pant for the admiration of your fellows? If you feel here, in the presence of God—for He is here—‘where two or three are gathered together in My name, there will I be in the midst of them’—if, I say, you feel that these questions, applied to each of you, cannot be denied, then, Oh, then Christ is not with you as your Comforter and Guide! Be ye reconciled with Christ. There is no peace for your souls out of His fold; there is no rest out of His arms, no true joys out of His courts. And this is the gospel that we preach, even reconciliation through His blood—His blood, shed for the sins of the whole world on Calvary; and it is to those who are reconciled that the promise is given: ‘Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’ O glorious promise! and abundantly fulfilled in all those who turn to Christ with sincerity and earnestness. Visibly He is not present; our eyes could not bear the majesty of His glory. But it is the experience of the faithful that He is, nevertheless, with those who love Him; they feel that He is near, and, like the sheep, they hear their Shepherd’s voice. He never forsakes His flock; through the desert and the wilderness, in crooked paths and thorny ways, through all the trials and difficulties of life, He guides them on to the banks of Jordan, on till they reach the promised land. Oh, my friends! that each of you would accept the offered aid of Jesus! He is not only able, but is willing to make you His; even now He is knocking at



the door of your hearts. Open to Him—open to Him, and be blessed ! Let Him enter, and He will teach you all things that it is needful for you to know of—themes far higher than the songs of poets, or than philosophy can declare. He will teach you the wisdom that maketh wise unto salvation, so that your hearts shall rejoice, and your souls make melody in the assurance of forgiveness through the merits of His blood. Time, dear friends, is hurrying on stealthily from beneath our feet ; we are all hastening to the common bourne. Oh ! then, how blessed we shall be, if we have the companionship of Him through the dark valley which all of us must pass, and which He has already trod. Time is, indeed, passing away, and some whom I now see, and probably all who now hear me, will never listen to my voice again in any house of prayer. I shall go my way, and you yours, for a little while ; but after that, eternity awaits us all. There, oh ! there may we meet again. My heart is full with love for you ; and oh ! join my feeble prayers that we may be all partakers of the Divine love. And even now—now while I speak—it seems to me (I have a deep sense thereof) that these prayers are heard ; and it is given me to believe, through faith, that we do not meet now for the last time, but that we shall be joined hereafter in singing praises to the Lamb. Most blessed hope, that renders parting bearable ! Oh, how fearful would be the thought that, coming among you in the name of Christ, I should not leave you as believers in Him—not believers in name only, but in truth ! And if ye truly believe in Him, ye are

among those for whom Christ prayed in the words, 'That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee : that they also may be one in us.' And for what purpose ?—' that they may behold My glory.' Christ's glory !—His glory in the eternal heavens—His everlasting majesty—Christ, the Lord of all. What ambition is there on earth comparable to this ? What prize can be offered as an equivalent ? Be not deceived, ye cannot serve two masters. See, then, whose servants ye are, that ye may be among the partakers of the glory of the Lord : Then we shall see Him as He is, whom the wrapt apostle saw upon that wondrous throne, surrounded by the white-robed and golden-crowned elders—that throne whence proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices ; where also the seven spirits of God burned in the semblance of seven lamps, before which was outspread a sea of glass like unto crystal. There, upon that molten crystal sea, the apostle saw them that had gotten the victory over the beast and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, with the harps of God, singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints !

“Lo ! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’ Be ye fervent in your desire for the fulfilment of this promise in each one of you, and your desire will be granted ; and when once you have tasted of the reality of His presence, then you will be able to exclaim, with

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Paul, that 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'"

In this simple manner she addressed her congregation for half an hour. She uttered what she believed to be the message given to her to deliver by the Holy Spirit. Whether the doctrine of immediate inspiration may be understood in its literal sense, was not a point advanced by those who listened to this humble servant of her Master; they heard her words reverently, and the truths she spoke went home to their hearts with convincing power. Many a silent tear was shed, and many an earnest prayer—true spiritual incense—ascended that morning to the throne of grace.

Again they sat in silence. Before they broke up, however, Jane Woolmar was briefly engaged in earnest supplication. Exchanging mutual greetings, the little party separated. In the course of the day the preacher and her companion visited each family, and addressed some special words of exhortation and comfort to the assembled household.

The Evelyns and their guests, with the exception of the boys, were assembled in the back drawing-room after tea. The blind was down, to exclude the rays of the setting sun, which nevertheless were sufficiently powerful to flood the room with light.

Jane Woolmar was seated on the couch, holding with a kindly grasp one of Lilla's hands, and every now and

then looking, almost in spite of herself, at the beauty of the young girl, for her creed set little store on external charms. Yet she could not avoid experiencing a pleasurable emotion in gazing on the loveliness of her young friend, such as we all feel when in the presence of one of the master-pieces of art, which seems to be a revelation of ideal perfection. "Yes," she thought to herself, "it is a beauteous shrine, and I think it is the fitting abode of a still more lovely spirit." This opinion she had formed from the conversation she had had with Lilla.

Sarah Everett sat beside Mr. Evelyn, who occupied an arm-chair, while his son stood in the window, his eye thoughtfully wandering from one to another in the group.

"Art thou a member of any body of Christians?" said Jane Woolmar, addressing the young man.

"No," said he, "I am not."

"Why not then make thy choice?"

"Is it indispensable, think you, that one should do so?"

"No," she said, "I would not say indispensable; but thou wilt find it advantageous to be associated with others in the cause of religion, who recognize a common order, who are bound by the same regulations, and whose views in the main would coincide with thine. Union, thou knowest, is strength; and as discipline is needful in the armies of the flesh, so should there be system in the battalions of Christ."

"But suppose I cannot find those with whom I could

in all points agree ; what would you advise ? I believe in what I humbly conceive to be all the essentials of religion ; but hitherto I have never found a body of Christians with whom I could perfectly accord in matters of faith and of church government."

"I hope, my dear young friend, thou dost not rely too much upon thyself. Let me advise thee to select some serious friend or friends whom thou canst trust, and hear what they can urge ; because I hold it to be an error to neglect altogether those bonds of membership which have in some form or other united all good men from the early days of Christianity down to the present time. Let not the pride of intellect carry thee away ! Submit thyself to the Lord, prostrate thy spirit before Him, and He will direct thy mind !"

"It is not altogether Eveleyn's fault," said Mr. Evelyn, who had been an attentive auditor to the conversation. "It is not altogether his fault, if fault it can be called, to think well and ponder long before so decided a step is taken. As thou knowest, Jane Woolmar, I was born a Friend, and only lost my membership by marrying out of the pale of the society, into which I never applied for re-admission. My children then were born of an Episcopalian mother, and Non-conformist father, who was not a member of any particular body of Christians. In the case of Eveleyn, my wife yielded to my views, and he was not baptized ; therefore his position is similar to my own. The others, though, are all members of the Church of England, as far as ceremonies can make them (a concession I

granted to the earnest entreaties of their mother). I trust, though, that, notwithstanding this disadvantage, you will find my son well grounded in the principles of religion, and very conversant with Holy Writ. Like thyself, I hope he may in good time see his way clear to enter into membership with some body of Protestant Christians ; but he must be allowed to use every care in making the selection."

Evelyn laid his hand on his father's shoulder, saying, "Such as you are I hope to be ; I am content with the forms that satisfy you."

"But, my boy," replied Mr. Evelyn, "I am an old man, the sands of my life are running low, my battle is nearly over—yours is beginning, and the sooner you display the flag you mean to sail under, the better for your highest interests."

"But why not," said Jane Woolmar, "come back into membership ? The society would gladly receive thee once again."

"There are many reasons that I cannot give thee, which prevent me from taking such a step ; but tell me, dost thou think that I should enter heaven easier by following out thy suggestion ?"

"Certainly not, dear friend," said she ; "but it would be a consolation to thee to feel that the ties of the Society were drawing thee into closer communion with many like-minded men. Thou wouldst enjoy the sweets of precious companionship on thy journey, that would perhaps lighten thy load, and regild thy latter days with some of the brightness which accompanies

youth when associated in a noble cause with kindred minds."

"Perhaps," replied Mr. Evelyn, "if I had to retrace my years, I should in this respect and many others act differently. But now that I am about putting off my burden, I care for no other association in the work of salvation than that of my children, or than is afforded me by such acceptable visits as you, dear friends, have paid me. I hope I have taught my children their duty; and when he (turning to his son) is called upon to fill my place, I trust that he will never forget the precepts of his father."

Eveleyn was silent; he could not trust himself to speak. Lilla's eyes were suffused with tears; and coming over to where her father sat, she put one arm round his neck, and kissed him; and then with her other hand played with his thin grey locks, now smoothing and now running her fingers through them.

"How precious," said Jane Woolmar, partly soliloquizing, "are the ties of affection; how hard it is to part even in thought from those we love! But more precious still is the faith that the blessed shall experience a happy and eternal re-union. I sometimes look forward in fancy to the period when I hope to meet not only those who are dear to me from personal knowledge, but those who were in like manner dear to them, and so on and up the line. Only imagine whole families, whose lives to each other on earth were dearer than their own, transformed by the power and love of God into angels of light, with deeper affections springing out of pure

natures, loving each other for ever, with an unchanging love, where the fear of death can never come, cloud-like, to chill even for a moment their unspeakable bliss."

"But would it not be dreadful," said Lilla, "to miss some fondly-looked-for link in the bright chain?"

"True, my child, so it seems to us now; but all our ideas of joy are taken from our terrestrial experiences of what we love, and extended to infinity, from which satiety is excluded. As for the particulars of the happiness of our glorified state, we can never know them—probably our faculties, constituted as they now are, could not comprehend them. This, however, we do know, that our vile bodies shall be changed into the likeness of His glorious body, and it is sufficient for us to be assured that we shall be the living reflection of the ineffable glory of the Prince of Peace. Suffice it then for us to cherish this belief, and to make our calling and election sure."

"Most true," said Mr. Evelyn. "I think that none but those who have travelled long through the dark valley, who have known from experience the unevenness of the way, the pressure of the inevitable burden which weighs down the pilgrim, and hinders his onward progress—none, I say, but such as those, can enter into his feeling of exquisite joy when he sees the bright gleam of morning tinting the hill-tops of the untrodden land, betokening the advent of eternal day and everlasting rest."

There was a deep silence. Mr. Evelyn continued: "Bright as is the prospect, it is hard, very hard, to

part from those we love—to leave the young and inexperienced behind to battle all alone with the world, when one would wish to be beside them with the wisdom of years to point out the pitfalls on the road.”

“Not alone, my friend,” said Jane Woolmar. “Remember that God Himself promises to be a Father to the fatherless, and Husband to the widow ; and I bless His holy name that I have known, and know, the truth of His promise. He has led me, He has sustained me, He has guarded me by night and by day over the wild waters, by land and by sea—everywhere He has been my help, and He will be a parent to thy little ones. Trust in the Lord !”

“I do, Jane Woolmar, and fear nothing,” said he, quoting the twenty-third Psalm. “‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.’”

When Eveleyn retired to rest that night, he acknowledged to himself that the day passed far swifter and more pleasantly than he could have anticipated. The sweet, love-breathing piety of his father’s guests had touched his better nature. He had not been carried away by the power of eloquence. Perhaps he would have preferred the discourse of Jane Woolmar if it had been constructed on the principles of art ; if, in dwelling upon the great truths of Christianity, she had clothed them in appropriate imagery, and applied them with dialectic skill. Though all this was wanting, her simple words, delivered in all earnestness, had affected

him more than any sermon he had ever listened to.

There are certain moods which we all experience, when our susceptibilities are so keenly alive that circumstances which at other times pass unnoticed are sufficient to stir the most secret chords of life. Eveleyn experienced this mental condition as he turned from one side to the other, vainly endeavouring to court sleep. At last he fell into a train of reflection, which led him to ponder deeply on the subjects which had engaged their evening thoughts.

"Truth and wisdom," he said to himself, "lie on the side of religion; there also true happiness is found. I will change all that is wanting in my life, so that I may conform to the requirements of a Christian!"

A good resolution, and made at a seasonable time, when his great disappointment had been to him like the breaking down of a barrier, which lets in through the breach all that profanes and pollutes.

Whether or not his strength will enable him to adhere to his resolve, the future will declare.

CHAPTER IV.

AN EPISODE.

WITH prayers and blessings, leaving the precious peace of God abiding in the house they left, Jane Woolmar and her companion had gone forward on their mission of love and mercy.

Mr. Evelyn sat alone in his office about mid-day, balancing his cash-book. "There," said he, as he closed the book, "that's finished. But stay! I forgot to compare the bank pass-book." He rapidly glanced over the entries. Suddenly he stopped.

"What's this? Thomas Evans, ninety pounds! This must be some mistake. I paid him nine pounds two days ago." And on referring to the leaf in his check-book, from which he had torn the check, he found—"Thomas Evans, for old canvas, nine pounds." "How extraordinary! I must send James (meaning his managing clerk) to the bank for an explanation."

He rang the bell. The errand boy answered the summons.

"Where is Mr. James?"

"Gone to his dinner, sir," said the boy.

"Then I must go myself," said Mr. Evelyn; and taking up his hat, he set out.

So quiet and retired were his habits, that it was almost an event to see old Mr. Evelyn walking down the main street. Many were the hands he had to shake, many were the kind words he had to return, and many the bows he had to acknowledge; for high and low, rich and poor, alike esteemed the good old gentleman. At length he reached his destination, and after the greetings of the banker were over, he leaned across the counter, and said in a low voice,—

"You cashed a cheque of mine two days ago, in favour of Thomas Evans?"

"Yes, we did."

"Can you tell me who presented it?"

"I forget," said the banker. Then, after thinking a moment, "If my memory does not deceive me, it was a little boy—a lad of ten or twelve. Yes, now I remember; and I said at the time, that it seemed a strange thing to send so young a messenger."

Mr. Evelyn thought a moment. "If I ask to see the cheque, they will suspect that there is something wrong;" and from benevolent motives he wished to conduct his inquiry as secretly as possible; but in the meanwhile the banker, who had been rummaging a huge pocket-book, produced the document in question.

Mr. Evelyn looked at it, and saw that the letters *ty* had been added to the nine, and an 0 to the figure 9.

The forgery was well executed, but a close inspection showed that the imitation of the tremulous handwriting of an old man was a little overdone, and that the up-stroke of the *y* was carried too far.

"Anything amiss, Mr. Evelyn?"

The old gentleman was too sincere to parry at any time a home thrust adroitly, so he answered—

"With your permission I must take this home; there is an error somewhere, but it will not require any alteration in your books, as far as I can see, at present. Good morning!"

"Good morning!"

All men hate to be cheated, but especially an honest man. To do good without expecting any return, is a degree of Christian excellence which many attain to; but to receive evil for good with equanimity, is to stretch ordinary virtue to the breaking point. Indignation, though, in this case, did not blend with Mr. Evelyn's sorrow at the discovery he had made.

"Let me," he said "endeavour to trace the author of this crime; and when I have found him, I shall see what extenuating circumstances may be urged in his favour. Heaven only knows what causes may have led to the commission of this sin! I will consult James on the subject."

When he returned to his office, he left a message with a clerk, "to request Mr. James to come to him as soon as he saw him."

This person was indebted for his position solely to the benevolence of Mr. Evelyn, who had taken him at

ten years of age from a charity school; and, having commenced as errand boy, he had in the space of twenty-five years been gradually promoted to the head clerkship, at a salary of two hundred pounds per annum, which post he had filled for two years since the death of his predecessor. He enjoyed his employer's complete confidence, and was consulted on almost every important occasion.

Mr. Evelyn had not to wait long before Mr. James made his appearance. In person he was short and slight, yet a good-looking little man, and boasted a very nice wife and two children.

"James," said his master, "I have made a very painful discovery this morning."

"Have you, sir?"

"Yes. It is very distressing to know that there is so much wickedness in the world. A forgery has been committed."

"You don't say so!" said Mr. James. "No large amount, I hope?"

"No."

"Ah! that's something!"

"No, James, that is the least important part of the transaction. It is the gross dishonesty, the terrible dereliction of principle, that distresses me. Look at this!" And he took the cheque with the altered figures, and handed it to his clerk.

"Surely, sir," said that individual, "this is your handwriting?"

"Part of it is, and part is not. Can't you see?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"That shows," said Mr. Evelyn, "how cleverly it is done. The cheque, originally, was for nine pounds. Now can you perceive the alteration?"

James again inspected the cheque, and at last confessed that he saw the difference; adding, "I hope you will follow this matter up, sir. The rascal ought to be punished. Do you suspect anybody?"

"To speak frankly, I do."

"May I ask his name, sir?"

"I imagine it must be Evans himself. I trust I do not do the man an injustice. Do you know where he lives, James?"

"At present he is in jail," was the reply.

"In jail! When?"

"He was apprehended yesterday on a charge of being in possession of goods which he knew were stolen. But I really think he is innocent. His second examination takes place to-morrow, when I suppose he will be admitted to bail."

"I hope it may prove as you say," said Mr. Evelyn. "Marine store-dealer though he be, he has always borne a good reputation hitherto; but the devil tempts men sometimes to undo their whole lives in one false step."

While they were conferring, a note was brought in and handed to Mr. Evelyn. It was written on dirty paper, by an illiterate person, and addressed, "Mr. Hevlin, Esquire,"—Mr. written with a small m. It ran thus:—

"sir—i am sory to say wich i am obleeged to tel—that i am in grate truble—the chek as you gaved me to days ago—i have had the bad luck to lose it—hopping that you will be so kinde as to stop it at the Bank

"i hop as your honer will plesse be so kinde as to giv me another in the room of it

"i am incient of the charg that they have brot me hear for

"this from your humbel servent

"T EVANS

"Bricklinton Jale"

"This is very extraordinary, James," said Mr. Evelyn, handing him over the note.

"It is indeed, sir," replied James, as he folded up the letter. "What is to be done?"

"That is the question. Evans would hardly have the assurance to write to me for another cheque if he had anything to do with the forgery; besides, now that I compare his writing with the *ty*, it is so totally unlike."

"So it is," rejoined James.

"We must endeavour to find out the boy who went to the bank." Mr. Evelyn walked to the window and stood looking out into the street for some time. "Yes," he said, "we must find out the boy, James, who got it cashed."

"How can you find him out, sir? You might as easily identify one pea in a sackful, as discover the young rascal."

"Just so," said Mr. Evelyn; "and yet my mind is deeply impressed with the idea that I should discover the offender." He now walked up to the desk to take possession of the cheque which he had laid there, but, to his surprise, it had vanished.

"James," said he, "did you see the cheque? I thought I put it on the desk a minute ago."

"No, sir, I did not! Perhaps you have put it in your pocket-book!"

In vain Mr. Evelyn searched his pockets, rummaged the papers, and overhauled the books; the cheque could not be found.

"Dear me," said he, "how extraordinary! What can have become of it?"

Just at this moment James was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and on pulling out his handkerchief the cheque fell upon the floor. Instantly seizing hold of it, he was about to put it quietly aside, when Mr. Evelyn's eye caught his.

The whole truth was now revealed. James knew it would be useless to attempt to deny his guilt, and therefore threw himself on his knees, imploring pardon.

The colour had left the old man's cheek, his lips quivered, and his whole frame shook with suppressed wrath. He scarcely could control himself. But by a tremendous effort he was at length able to say in a low, quiet tone, "Meet me here to-morrow at ten. Now, go!"

When James left the room Mr. Evelyn sat down

upon a desk stool, and fairly gasped for breath. The viper sting of ingratitude burned fiercely for a while.

"The man," said he, "whom I have raised from among the sweepings of his race, whom I have treated as a friend, whom I have confided in implicitly ; whose education I gave him, whose wants I have provided for, whose happiness I have considered as my own. He to rob me ! He to repay all my kindness by committing a villainous forgery ! I must punish him. Justice must not be defrauded,—the law must take its course. Fearful thought to see this man, for whom I felt no ordinary regard, branded as a felon, his wife an out-cast, his children degraded ! What rivers of prospective evil do I see flowing from this source ! The wife starving ; the children deprived of a father's care, pointed at as the sons of a criminal, and the taunt driving them too into vicious courses ! Then if I pardon this man, and discharge him, I cannot give him a character ; no one will employ him ; and once having had recourse to sins such as he has committed, will he not recur to them again, and bring up his family to follow in his steps ? No ! This is really weakness to hesitate. Though it will half kill me, I must do my duty. Society demands this sacrifice of my feelings, and I must yield. However, I will sleep over it." And with this resolve, he left the office for the day.

His children remarked that evening that their papa seemed far from well, he was so silent and abstracted ;

but to all their inquiries he simply answered, "Quite well!"

After Mr. Evelyn retired to his room, he sat down to revolve the circumstances in his mind again, as, indeed, he had been doing the whole evening; but now, he thought, in the quiet of his chamber he would be able to arrive at some resolution. What he most desired to do was to consider the question entirely irrespective of personal interests, and this he found to be no easy task. For every course that suggested itself there were cogent reasons; but the solution that he sought was how he could best act in conformity with his duty as a Christian. Had he been a less conscientious man, he would at once have determined to prosecute the offender, and have thrown on him the responsibilities of the inevitable consequences, regarding them as a portion of his punishment; and he would have justified himself by the Mosaic law, that as the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, he by so doing was simply the means of fulfilling the Divine edict. This reasoning did not satisfy him; and, remembering that Christ had said that a man should not forgive his brother seven times only, but seventy times seven, he considered whether an occasion had now arisen to exercise clemency judiciously. "No one," he said to himself, "is cognisant of this man's crime; the secret rests between us. Why should I not say, I forgive you?" If I do so, shall I not be turning loose on society a wretch dressed in the garb of an honest man, and be thus a party with him in deceiving others as to his respect-

ability ; while he may gain courage from the immunity he has experienced on this occasion to commit more extensive crimes ? Then, again, if I let the law take its course, will he not feel that his punishment is an equivalent for his offence, and when the term expires he will return hardened at heart and at war with society, who will not fail to regard him as a pariah ; until he is at length driven, by desperation, into wilder courses still, till hell will hereafter receive him as an inhabitant. Yes, this is the most serious consideration. The felon must be a felon all his days. The ranks are closed against him ; he can no more return to his place. He sees every finger pointed at him, revenge burns in his heart, and in the end a soul is lost. No, I cannot take this responsibility upon myself. It is too terrible ! And if I pardon him, his conscience will not forgive him. Though to his fellows he will seem undefiled, whenever he reflects the silent voice will whisper, ‘ Thou art amenable to the laws ; thy place should be the felon’s dock.’ Thus will he bear his judgment ever with him, until, by God’s grace, he receives a message of forgiveness from heaven. Then will there be peace for his soul.”

Fervent were the prayers of the old man, that night, that he might be guided by Divine wisdom.

At the appointed hour next morning, Mr. Evelyn sat at his desk. Punctual to the time, James entered.

“ Shut the door, sir ! ”

James obeyed, and turned round to face his master. He was very pale, his lips were firm set, his eye was

steady. Entirely changed from the suppliant of the last evening, he had made up his mind to submit firmly to his fate, knowing that, as a general rule, quiet men, when once enraged, are more to be feared than the violent, whose wrath always gives place to re-action in a little time.

"Have you any excuse to offer for your conduct?" said his master.

"None, sir."

"What induced you to commit this crime?"

"I know of none but that offered by the temptation."

"How often have you defrauded me before?"

"Never, sir; so help ——"

"Don't swear; if I cannot believe your word, I should not value your oath. What reason had you for taking possession of the cheque, when I left it on the desk, yesterday?"

"That I might destroy the evidence of my guilt."

"But was not that course the most likely to lead to your detection?"

"No! It might have raised your suspicions, and I might have lost my situation, though you could have proved nothing; but as long as you held the cheque, sooner or later, my detection would have been inevitable."

"Who cashed it for you?"

"A boy I accidentally met in the street."

"Who is he?"

"I do not know, he is a stranger, I have never seen him before or since."

"Have you reflected on the enormity of your guilt?"

"I have, sir."

"And its consequences upon your family?"

"Yes;" and his lip quivered.

"Do you not ask for pardon?"

"I did so last night, sir, in the first paroxysm of grief and fear; but my heart tells me I cannot expect forgiveness."

There was a long pause.

"James?" said Mr. Evelyn.

"Sir!"

"I forgive you—may God forgive you also!"

The man staggered as if he had been shot, and fell gasping against the wall.

"Be calm," said Mr. Evelyn, "and resume your place."

James seized his hand, and hoarsely stammered,—
"May the great God bless you!"

No more was said on either side, no pledges were asked, no promises made. Neither was this sad scene ever reverted to again.

That day, Thomas Evans, who had been liberated, the evidence against him having broken down, received nine sovereigns from Mr. Evelyn. The cheque was returned to the bank, with the explanation that the error had been rectified.

Doubtless, had the world judged Mr. Evelyn, it would have pronounced him to be mad or a fool. But

Mr. Evelyn believed practically in the New Testament, and he held it to be positively incumbent on him to practise its morality, and leave the consequences to its author. He was not one of those men who measure faith by reason, and refuse obedience where they cannot understand. Nevertheless, his creed was not "I believe because it is impossible;" but "*I believe beyond, but not contrary to my reason.*" He believed in the attainment of that degree of virtue which the Apostle designates perfection. He believed that the Divine Spirit immediately taught the true believer, and that the Spirit that teaches should take precedence of the truths that it has taught. So the Bible had a second place in his estimation, although he prized it highest of all books. He believed in the doctrine of non-resistance, and therefore held that all wars were of the devil, and anti-christian. To-day he would have been called a peace-at-any-price man, would have been taunted for his lack of patriotism, and laughed at for refusing to support the volunteer corps; and he would have answered, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And he might have added, that although Christ foretold the siege of Jerusalem, he never commanded his disciples to arm in its defence.

Good old man! Muscular Christianity was not invented in his day—at least, it was not promulgated in fashionable novels, written by the disciples of the Prince of Peace. But literal, unleavened Christianity is a terrible stumbling-block.

CHAPTER V.

A COURSING MATCH.

THE harvest had been gathered—the autumn wheat had been sown. Cub-hunting had begun, and the regular work was close at hand for the lovers of the chase; when one fine morning, as Eveleyn was walking along the headland in the mangold field, he was startled by the apparition of Bob Edwards on horseback, tearing over the high fence in front of him.

“You sinner!” said Eveleyn, laughing, “I shall send you in a bill for tearing my fences.”

“I thought I should find you here, old boy,” said the other. “The men told me you had gone in this direction. Deuced good bulbs these, upon my word! What were they manured with?”

“Forty loads of dung, and three hundred weight of guano to the acre,” said Eveleyn.

“Nothing like it,” said Bob. “You can’t get fat crops, any more than fat oxen, without plenty of good food.”

"Have you seen my new skim plough?" said Eveleyn.

"No, I haven't; but I cannot stay now to look at it. I want to know if you can come over to my place next Tuesday. Henly the parson, Charley Davis, Doctor Elwood, Thompson, and one or two others, are coming to course, and take a bit o' dinner afterwards. I engaged 'em all yesterday."

"Thanks," said Eveleyn; "most happy."

"That's all right, then. Mind, Tuesday, ten o'clock. Don't be late;" and Bob cantered off.

Tuesday soon came round; and, true to time, Eveleyn at the appointed hour found himself at Holly Bank—the name which distinguished Bob's house—probably because none of that evergreen grew near it.

Bob met him at the door, and ushered him into his parlour, where cold beef, hams and fowl, tea, coffee, and jugs of beer graced the table.

"It quite escaped my memory to ask you to breakfast, and I never thought of it till this morning. You are such a ceremonious beggar, you never will come without a formal invitation."

"That's a fearful exaggeration," said Eveleyn. "Did I not come over to call one day, and stayed a week with you?"

"Ah, yes, once in your life. But come, what'll you take?"

"Nothing, thanks!"

"You must have some beer."

"Not a drop for me!"

“Confound your abstinence!”

At this juncture Parson Henly was announced, and Bob went off to welcome him.

We must introduce the parson. In person he was slight, with a red face, hair and whiskers to match—the latter very much curled; grey, twinkling eyes, and thick, rather sensual-looking lips. He was celebrated as one of the best sportsmen in Clayshire, a good shot, a capital fisherman, and no one better to hounds. In his clerical capacity little could be said, except that he always bought short sermons, and read them fast; save when he took an early dinner first, and then he drawled a good deal. He was not celebrated for attention to the sick, but when he did visit them he always left something beside his blessing behind him. But nobody knew how to make brandy-punch more skilfully than he did, and few played a better rubber at whist.

One by one the whole party dropped in. Some drank beer, some wine, one or two coffee. Davis contented himself with brandy-and-water; and as he liked the tippie, he soon pronounced himself to be in good spirits.

“You mean,” said the parson, “you are putting good spirits into yourself!”

“Yes,” said Charley; “the spirit of your adoption! ha! ha! ha!”

The parson vanished through the door; everybody followed him.

Some on foot, some on horseback, attended by men

leading the greyhounds in couples, they started for the scene of action, Bob Edwards showing the way. It was a lovely autumn morning, the brown leaves rustled on the oaks, the birds chattered on the sprays, the clouds sailed slowly along the heavens in large isolated masses, while their shadows, that glided over the meadows and fallows, seemed as though they were cast by the wings of some huge birds soaring between the earth and the sun.

Loud laughter and coarse jests rung out clearly; the brightness of nature enlivened everyone, and the very animals seemed to feel the exhilarating influence of the weather.

They soon reached a large meadow, one end of which sloped down towards a brook, and terminated in an acre or two of gorse and rushes.

"We shall find pussy in the bottom to a dead certainty," said Bob Edwards. "Now bring on a brace of the dogs, and look sharp for a see ho!"

Two or three on horseback preceded those on foot, and they had hardly entered the wet ground before a hare started.

"Gone away!" shouted half-a-dozen at once; but the poor creature, fortunately taking the cover, stole off without letting the dogs see her, and thus escaped.

"See ho!" said Bob quietly. "Now bring the dogs on. Stand back, you fellows," to some of the men who had followed; "stand back, let the hare have fair play."

"Where is she?" said Eveleyn.

"Look here! Under that furze bush; her head this way."

"I don't see her."

"There," said Bob; "don't you see her eye?"

"Yes, I do now. How close she is lying! She looks no larger than a rabbit. Poor thing!"

And a pang of remorse shot through him as he watched the creature, evidently aware of the danger she was in, and yet without courage to move. He fancied he could see her heart beat, and that her whole frame quivered with fear.

"It is a cruel, cruel sport," he said to himself, "and cowardly too; so many monsters engaged in compassing the destruction of one harmless, helpless animal."

Whatever compunctions he felt, none of the party besides evinced any.

"Are you all ready?" shouted Bob.

"Yes, all ready."

"I'll start her up hill. Look out!" and he rode up to the crouching hare.

Thrice he struck the bush that covered her, but so great was her terror that she did not move. He struck again, and this time the cord of the lash touched her fur; still she remained quiet, and a second time the lash tickled her back, before the poor beast sprang to her legs; but once roused, she cleared the intervening gorse bushes between her and the grass land in a series of rapid bounds, and then burst up the hill like the wind.

"Gone away!" screamed some.

"D—— you!" roared Charley Davis; "what's the use of that row? Slip the dogs!"

The greyhounds rushed after their prey, but the hare, taking advantage of the long hind legs given her by Dame Nature, chose the steepest part of the ground, and gained on her pursuers.

"They won't turn her in this field," said Bob, galloping after them; and as he spoke, the hare topped the bank, and was out of sight.

No sooner did she gain the next field than she turned short by the grip of the hedge, and ran down with the inclination of the ground; so that when the dogs got over the fence they could not see her. A few seconds in coursing often decides the question of life or death. The dogs dashed out over the fallow, but when they caught a sight of pussy, she was flying over the second fence with a lead of three hundred yards. On they went, the horsemen following at speed.

"I never saw a hare run so fast in my life," said Bob Edwards to the parson; "or else these dogs are the slowest I ever saw."

"No," replied the latter, "the dogs are not to be surpassed in Clayshire. That black bitch of mine now leading has won three cups, and I'll back her against any dog in the kingdom."

The ground being high where they then were, they could see over several fields beyond; in the second one before them the hare was evidently losing ground.

"See !" said the parson, "my bitch has turned her, and the brown dog missed her as she passed."

The hare now seemed to redouble her energies, and the greyhounds pressed still closer.

"I'll bet you five pounds," said the parson, "my bitch takes her at the fence. She always takes them at the fence. She never misses !"

"Done !" said Bob.

"Done !" said the descendant of Peter.

On flew the hare, her long ears back upon her neck. On rushed the dogs, not ten yards behind. Nearer, still nearer ! The spectators could not speak for excitement. The hare jumped on to the bank ; the black bitch sprung forward.

"It's all up !" screamed the parson.

But whether the dog had miscalculated the distance, or whether her feet slipped, they could not tell ; at any rate, instead of taking the hare, she chested the fence, and fell back apparently lifeless on the ground, at the same time upsetting her companion, so that poor puss made good her escape by a miracle.

Something very like an oath fell from the parson's lips when he saw his favourite *hors de combat*, and putting spurs to his horse, he galloped furiously to the rescue. Fortunately for him, the doctor was near at hand, and he, coming up, opened a vein, and saved the poor brute's life. The other dog had also hurt himself, and both had to be sent home.

"It's a confounded bad beginning," said Bob ;

"but never mind, I hope we shall have a good ending. Let's look for another hare!"

For this purpose they had not to go out of the field, neither did the hare cross a single bank before she gave up her life to her merciless foes.

Does the reader imagine that Eveleyn's compunctions had driven him home? Not at all! Whatever little sentimental qualms might have disturbed his stomach in the outset, they vanished with the first two minutes' canter, and no one was more actively engaged during the day than himself in promoting the sport.

It would be tedious to describe every course, and how Magic beat Mentor, and Juliet and Romeo were ties. Many a hare got away without being coursed; some escaped from the dogs, and thirty had bitten the dust. The sport had led them some miles from home; and, as it was approaching four o'clock, the keenest sportsmen of the party remembered that dinner was ordered for five.

"Let's have a scurry home," said Davis; "it will be a sight more jolly than riding round the road. Who'll come?"

"I will," said one.

"I will," said another.

"I won't!" said Bob.

"What's the matter with you?" said the parson.
"Come along, man!"

"Come along!" echoed the doctor.

"Nonsense!" said Bob; "I hate these larks; they always end badly."

"You be shot for an old muff," said the doctor.

"Well, needs must if the devil drives or leads," said Charley Davis. Then shouting out to Henly, "I say, parson, Edwards is reviling you! ha! ha! ha!" and putting spurs to his horse, he galloped off, the others following in a cluster.

"Deuced nice nag that of yours, parson; let's have a spin across this meadow."

Henly was nothing loth, and away they went as hard as they could split, the churchman rather in advance. They pulled up at the fence, the layman a little nettled at being beaten; he called out to his friend,—

"Do you see that white post in the top of the field yonder?"

"Where do you mean?"

"Why, at the far end of the north park. Don't you see it?"

"Yes, I do," replied Henly; "what of it?"

"Why, I'll run you first round it for a sovereign."

"No, thank you, old boy; my life's not insured against coal-pits!"

"Coal-pits! nonsense! they are a mile to the right."

"Not a bit of it! I tell you they are scattered all about those fields there, among the short gorse; and you can't see them till you're in them."

"Then you won't have it?"

"Not to-day, thank you."

"Quite right," said Bob Edwards, coming. "Davis must be mad to make such a proposal; all that ground is riddled like a honeycomb. I was just going

to say we had better not cross in that direction, though it's the nearest road home."

"There's no danger," said the parson, "only take it coolly."

In ten minutes from that time they approached the fields in question. They extended over an area of about one square mile, and were subdivided by low banks, most of which were broken down. The whole surface was dotted with heaps of black earth and refuse, formed by sinking the shafts—the work of the farmer, or farmers, who raised the culm by the very simple process of digging a deep hole down to the vein, which was generally broken, and did not admit of the application of any methodical or scientific scheme. As soon as they had exhausted all the culm in the vicinity of the pit, it was abandoned, and another commenced; until the ground above was closely covered with the rubbish raised by their works.

The little coal-field we have been describing had been abandoned for several years. In many places, hazel, mingled with thorns and brambles, covered these artificial hillocks, and extended for acres around. Then there were patches of rush and impoverished grass, where a few half-starved cattle struggled with death, while other portions were covered with furze. Avoiding this uninviting region, the whole party skirted it to the left, passing through some stubble ground in the direction that Charley Davis wished the parson to race. The latter was leading, and seeing some of the men preparing to leap the fence they were approaching, he

turned in his saddle saying, "Here's a gap," and with the handle of his hunting whip pulled a thorn bush out of the way, and quietly walked his horse over. No sooner had the creature reached the other side, than the ground gave way beneath her, and horse and rider disappeared. Charley Davis had only time to pull his horse up and shout, "Hold hard! so help me —, the parson's gone to earth;" and jumping off, he threw the reins to a groom, exclaiming to the others, "Gallop off for cart ropes and a ladder—my dear fellows, be quick!" Carefully approaching the edge of the shaft, he looked down, but all was darkness beneath. He could hear the floundering of the horse in the water.

"Good —! If poor Henly isn't killed, he's drowned." Throwing himself flat on the ground, and putting his hands above his eyes to shut out the light, he could distinguish, some twenty feet below him, the horse jammed against the sides of the pit, when, to his inexpressible relief, he heard a voice beneath—"Hallo! Henly, is that you?" as if there could be any doubt of another friend being with him; unless he expected the horse to speak. Presently, as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he, as well as half-a-dozen others who crowded round, could see their reverend friend struggling to get on the back of his horse; and, fortunately for him, the poor beast remained as quiet as a lamb. At length he succeeded in getting one leg over; not satisfied with this success, he raised himself and stood upon the saddle, with one foot stuck against the side of the shaft, and his friends, knotting four hunting whips to-

gether, lowered them down, so that he was able to steady himself, and relieve his mare of his weight, which was gradually pressing her down below water. "Bravo, Henly! Well done, old fellow!" shouted his friends. "The ladder will be here directly."

The farm-house was close at hand, and in a few minutes the cart ropes were brought, and the parson, minus his hat, was restored once more to his friends, who crowded round him, shaking hands, and making eager inquiries if he was hurt. "Not a bit, not a bit, thankye! My grandfather used to say he wouldn't put cold water in his shoes, much less into his stomach; but I've done both to day."

"Here's my flask," said Charley, his eyes twinkling with real pleasure at seeing his friend safe on *terra firma*.

"Here's mine—and mine," said all who were provided with pocket-pistols.

But the parson could not answer either of them, for his eyes turned up to heaven—to—to—a—let the brandy run down easy. Draining it to the last drop, he handed it back. "Once more I breathe," said he, with a smile—and added, his face instantly assuming a serious expression, "Thank God!"

"D'ye think the mare is damaged?" said Charley.

"I'm afraid her back's broke," said her master.

"Dear me, I hope not; but what will you do for a hat? Here, take my handkerchief, and tie it round your head."

"A good suggestion—I'll adopt it," said Henly.

By this time the ladder was brought, and let down. Eveleyn volunteered to descend, and taking a couple of cart ropes down, he soon succeeded in passing them double round the mare; one under her flank, and the other round her girth. Bringing up the ends, the party divided, one to each side of the pit, and with some little difficulty the mare was landed, to the surprise of everybody, without scratch or bruise. Critically her owner examined her, talking affectionately to her the whole time. "I say, old girl, how d'ye feel? none the worse for your cold bath, eh? Remember next time, old woman, that the church does not approve of baptism by immersion! D'ye hear, old lady?" Then getting on her back, he walked her gently at first, then trotted a few yards, and exclaimed joyously—"Positively she's all right, but a basin of gruel, with half a pint of whiskey, will do her no harm; so the sooner we get home the better."

"Get home!" said Bob; "you shall not stir from my house to night, nor your horse either; so make your mind easy, my friend. Now, gentlemen, it's time we were at Holly Bank; but here's the high road, and we won't be long."

CHAPTER VI.

A BACHELOR'S PARTY.

Nothing could induce Henly to leave the stable until he saw his mare take her gruel, which she drank without wincing at the spirit. Then Bob took him upstairs, and gave him a dry suit and a hot glass of toddy.

"How d'ye feel now?"

"Right as the weather-cock on the church steeple!"

"Then shall we join our friends?"

"By all means."

During dinner the parson's adventure formed the chief subject of conversation.

"Tell us, now, how you felt," said Charley Davis.

"Really," said Henly, "I had no time to remark on my sensations, and only know that I went down head foremost, and that I thought I should never stop descending till my hat stuck in the soft clay-mud at the bottom; and then I floated to the top, and came up between the mare's legs. Fortunately the pit was too

narrow to let her come farther than high-water mark, or we should have been both drowned."

"Well, I declare," said Charley, "when I saw you disappear, I thought the earth had opened to swallow you up, like those fellows, Corah and Damon!"

"Dathan, probably?" suggested Eveleyn.

"Never mind—we aren't partic'ler in these matters, are we, Henly?"

"Must you be ever chaffing?" said the latter.

"That reminds me," said Charley—"I'll tell you a good story. You know old Colonel Busby?"

"Yes."

"Well, he's a wonderful old boy for a joke. One day, when he had quite lost his voice from cold, he met John Purle, just after his marriage with Miss Pryse, walking down Main Street alone. 'Hallo!' said Busby, in a voice like a raven's, 'you are a *precious* fellow!' 'What do you mean?' said John. 'Why, a pearl without price, to be sure!' 'I wonder,' said Jack, 'that you are never tired of punning.' 'My dear fellow,' said Busby, 'you, brought up in the country, and not to know that a kernel (colonel) is always wrapped up in chaff?' Jack replied, as quick as lightning, 'So that accounts for your being so husky!' Ha! ha! ha!" roared Charley at his own story, and all the rest joined.

Cachinnation, however it may bespeak the empty mind, is nevertheless catching; few men, especially at a bachelor's party, can resist its influence.

Story followed story, and joke joke, most of them

very full-flavoured—but the parson duly coughed at the worst of them, and thus saved his propriety.

"I say, doctor," said Charley, "is it true that Miss M'Catty caught you kissing her maid, as she was bringing up her mistress's gruel?"

"Who told you, Davis?"

"Why, Henly, of course! He is always well up in revelations."

"Don't tell crams, Davis," said the parson.

"Well, then, 'twas Edwards—and the girl told him!"

"Another stretcher!" remarked Bob; "you'll take away my character!"

"The greatest service I could do you."

"Pity you can't lose your own, Charley," retorted Bob.

Charley, however, went on—

"But somebody told me. It must have been Miss M'Catty herself."

"No, faith, you're wrong," said the doctor.

"I'll tell you who it was—'twas Ethelfield."

"Confound Ethelfield! he's a regular sieve," said the doctor.

"Tell us the joke, at any rate," broke in half-a-dozen voices at once.

"I was called in," said the doctor, "to see the old gal—she was suffering from influenza—and the next morning, having to go into the country, I thought I would see her before my usual hour; so I went to the house, and finding the front door open, I entered. As I was going up-stairs, who should I see but that

pretty maid of hers, Jessie, walking up gently before me. When I got up to her, for the life of me I could not help putting my arm round her neck and kissing her. I looked up—there was the old lady's face peeping through the door. I suppose the girl had been long, and the bell being, as I have since found, broken, I fancy she came to call her, and was just in time to catch me. Instead of rushing down stairs, I rushed after my patient. She had just got into bed; one hand covered her mouth. I heard a sharp click, and saw the drapery beneath the bed vibrating. She turned round on me, her face colouring up. 'I shall dispense with your services for the future, sir,' said she. I did not reply, but took my seat by the bedside, and made some inquiries after her health. Lifting the drapery beneath with my foot, I saw the tumbler of cold water from which she had just taken her artificial teeth. She instantly detected me; and although I knew, and everybody knows, that the old gal has been indebted to the dentist for her grinders for the last ten years, yet she is so vain she will believe it is a secret. 'Poor Mr. McGregor's very ill,' said I. This was a tender point, as she still thinks old Mac will come forward. 'Dear me, doctor,' said she, 'what's the matter?' 'Terrific gum-boil,' said I—'I lanced it this morning. Most extraordinary preservation his teeth are in, to be sure; I couldn't help telling him so.' 'Ah,' said he, 'doctor, I've one weakness!' 'What is that?' said I. 'I've a horror of false teeth.' 'Mere prejudice,' said I. 'Perhaps it is,' said he; 'but if I

loved a woman ever so much, and found out that she wore false teeth, I would have nothing more to say to her.' You should have seen how pale the old lady became—then changed to yellow, and green. When I left the room, 'Doctor,' said she, squeezing my hand, 'will you forgive my uncalled-for observation? I am naturally hasty;' and then added, 'Your secret is safe with me!' I returned her squeeze, and said, 'You can depend on my discretion.' So Mac's imaginary gum-boil saved me a good patient; but I really told Ethelfield in confidence, and he had no right to betray me."

"Come, gentlemen," said the host, "pass the wine. Will no one favour us with a song? Come, Eveleyn!"

"No, I never sing," was Eveleyn's answer.

"Davis, you will favour us;" and without farther pressing, he began:—

"I loved a young lady not eighteen years old,
When I had only reached twenty;
She had no tin, and I had no gold,
But of love we had both of us plenty.

I loved a young lady: she whispered to me,
'Oh, Charley love, you are my darling;
But as you've no money, my dearest,' said she,
'If we marry we'll surely get snarling!'"

"We'll surely get snarling;" and here Master Charley stopped.

"Go on! go on!"

"It's no go, my friends; I'm gone—stumped—

broke down. Doctor, come, it's your turn now ;" and with equally little solicitation that gentleman commenced

THE SPIDER.

" I am a spider, and live on a wall,
On the chairs, on the sofa, and carpet I crawl,
And keep my eyes open—and all that I see
I note in black spots on the tapestry.

When the maid imagines there's nobody by,
And draws down the blind, and closes the door,
Then takes out a letter all on the sly,
I drop myself down by a string and peep o'er.

Though Mary Eliza meets Mr. James Bliss,
So prim as she comes out of meeting,
I watch them alone, and count every kiss—
And mark her young heart how it's beating !

When smooth Mrs. Grace blows up Mr. G.,
And says he's a wretch and a sinner :
Whate'er the world thinks, it's no myst'ry to me
Why the poor fellow daily grows thinner !

I watch the tee-totaller open his box,
And take out his liquor and drink it ;
When he turns that bright key he fancies he locks
Up his secret—poor fool ! let him think it !

What hints for the toilet, ye girls, I might give,
What hints about temper and passion,
What secrets concerning how some strive to live,
And keep up a semblance of fashion !

MORAL.

"Ye husbands and wives, ye young maidens and men,
In your quarrels, your loves, and your wooing,
Remember, though safe from humanity's ken,
The spiders remark what you're doing—
The spiders remark what you're doing!"

"Bravo, doctor! Encore! encore!" shouted half-a-dozen; but the doctor shook his head, and could not be persuaded to indulge his friends again.

"Pass the wine, gentlemen! pass the wine!" said the host, an admonition which fell on willing ears.

Eveleyn, who had been half asleep during the musical portion of the entertainment, now mingled in the conversation.

"Whose property is that adjoining the coal-pits, can anybody tell me?"

"Levinge's," said Davis.

"If I had been conducted there blind-folded, I should have imagined myself in Ireland, where I have seen land equally ill-managed."

Davis, however he might feel disposed to criticise the county people himself, could not bear the idea of hearing them, or their properties, remarked on disadvantageously by a member of what he devoutly believed to be an inferior caste, and at once came to the rescue.

"It's all very fine," he said, "to talk of the condition of property in Clayshire; but as long as we have such a beggarly set as the majority of the farmers are, what can you expect?"

"I don't agree with you," said Eveleyn, "as to the condition of the farmers; the class of farmers which you complain of are the only sort of men you could expect to live under the system that prevails in this county, in the management of land. When the farm-houses are hovels; when the homesteads are scarcely large enough to shelter half-a-dozen goats; when there are no leases as a general rule—no tenant-rights; and lastly, when the cottages of the labourers are not better than pig-styes, how can you expect men of education and capital to engage in farming subject to such conditions?"

"I should like to know," replied Davis, "where are the men whom any sane man would entrust with leases? and where are the landlords who can afford to build homesteads? and where will you find farmers willing to pay interest on money expended in permanent improvements?"

"If," said Eveleyn, "the landed proprietors were determined to improve their properties, they could do so if they wished. Government has provided means whence they can borrow money, and charge it on their estates. Where the law of entail prevents the granting of leases, a system of tenant-right, that is, compensation for unexhausted improvements, can be agreed upon; and provided landlords will give security to their tenants for the investment of their capital, money will be found to carry out their share of the work. But the fact is, proprietors in Clayshire are still haunted with the sentiment of feudalism, and do not wish to see a class

of independent men grow up on their estates, who would only laugh at their pride and consequence, farm as they like, and vote as they please in spite of them."

"Now you have let the cat out of the bag," said Davis. "That's just what you radicals want, political freedom; which means, to enjoy the right of making free with what you don't possess. But I for one will take precious good care, whenever I come into my property, that none of my tenants give themselves airs—d—n me if I don't!"

Eveleyn could not help smiling at this plain enunciation of the doctrine of might *versus* right. He replied—"What the radicals may want I cannot pretend to say; I don't fight under their banner; but I believe the wildest of them is, in reality, a far more harmless animal than he appears at a distance; and I also believe that the possession dearest to nine-tenths of the Squirearchy of Clayshire is—Power, Power and Patronage. For these two ideas they would sacrifice everything,—see their estates encumbered, their farm-houses ruinous, their fields swamps, their tenants on a level with labourers, and their labourers serfs!"

"Not so fast, sir, not so fast," said Charley, growing a little warm with the discussion. "The changes you speak of are not so easily effected as you theorists imagine. We cannot sweep away the whole population, and start afresh with a new team, but must take the men as we find them; and they would be the first to repudiate your doctrine, practically at least. Many farmers won't take leases if you offer them; and as

for paying interest on money expended by the proprietors in draining, building, and so forth, they'd see you at Jerusalem first."

"I do not deny," said Eveleyn, "that in dealing with the agricultural population of all classes you have to work with very crude materials. But what I complain of is that, unless some change is made, every thing will remain in the same position a thousand years hence. The system that made them what they are is still in full force; and if they are bigoted, narrow-minded, selfish, and apathetic, is it not the result of past centuries of oppression, and of decades of neglect? The educated classes must extend to them the humanising influence of education, and assist them to throw off the fetters of ignorance, and cherish in them the germ of better things; then you will see a reformation among this class of the community, such as you perhaps never dreamt of."

"And which," said Charley "I devoutly hope will never come to pass."

"I thought so," said Eveleyn; "and yet I can hardly imagine you are serious, knowing, as you must know, the evils that exist."

"What evils?"

"You must know them as well as I can tell you—but I will mention a few facts. There are scores of farmers who never see fresh meat on their tables oftener than once a week, and who on many days eat no kind of animal food, yet many of these men have money out at interest, money which is accumulated

by denying themselves everything but the necessaries of life, and which ought to be expended on their ill-cultivated farms ; but lack of security on the one hand, and ignorance on the other, prevent them from doing so. There are thousands of labourers who receive nearly all their wages in kind, and men with large families of children, six, eight, or ten in number, are not paid in cash more than three shillings per week, and then probably they have to repay a pound or two in rent for their hovels ; while estimating all they earn at the market price of the goods, they do not receive more than nine shillings a week at the utmost, out of which sum they have to provide food, firing, clothing, and rent ; nineteen twentieths of the cottages contain only two rooms, where the sexes cannot be separated, to the utter destruction of their morals ; many of which cottages are built of clay, and floored with mortar, and are redolent of every evil odour. I could show you a cottage, the property of a reverend gentleman, a cottage containing one room, which affords accommodation for a family of ten. In one corner lies a basket of rags which are spread over the floor at night, their common sleeping room ; and if all the laws of men and God are violated in that dwelling, is it to be wondered at ? Is it not a custom in some districts for the female servants, when hiring, to stipulate for the possession of the doorway two nights in the week, that they may turn in their sweethearts ? Look at the returns of the Registrar, at the evidence in affiliation cases ; and there are other offences which you also have heard of. Bear-

ing all these facts in mind, how can you ask me what evils I complain of?"

"It's all d—rot, Eveleyn. If you build these creatures nice cottages, they would prefer their old ones. If you insisted on their occupying them, they would take in lodgers, and that would not improve their morals. Their morals, indeed! what have young men like you and me got to do with morality? Leave that to Henly and his fellows, and behave generously to the pretty girls we meet."

"Speak for yourself," said Eveleyn; "your banter does not affect my argument."

"Which is," said Davis, "to incite the poor against the rich—the tenant against his landlord—the labourer against the tenant. Leave the question alone. If you moot it, you will put all the county against you."

"You do me an injustice," said Eveleyn, "I would be the last person to set class against class. But I want to see justice in the land—I want to see the duties of property recognized—I want the foul blot of immorality wiped out, and I only regret my inability to put my convictions into operation. The press teems with articles on the social sores of the towns, and the pious inveigh against the sins of great cities; but poll the population head for head, and were the truth known, here in the quiet country, in sequestered villages, in romantically situated cottages, the abodes of Arcadian simplicity, as the uninitiated imagine—here, I say, sins fester and corrupt beneath the blue sky of heaven, surrounded by the unpolluted air, such as are supposed to

be peculiar to the cellars of Liverpool or the dens of St. Giles."

"What are you two fellows jawing about?" said the doctor; "here's the coffee quite cold, Henly's asleep, Edwards is yawning, and all of us are bored with your noise. Come, finish the mocha, and let's have a rubber."

In a short time the tables were cleared, the party divided into two, and cutting, they took their places for whist.

"What's your stakes?" said Davis.

"Shillings and half-crowns," replied the host.

"What did you say?" asked another; "shilling points and half-crown on the rub—any betting besides you like?"

With this understanding the game was commenced, nearly every one smoking, till those who sat at one table could scarcely see those at the other. For two hours little was said except in reference to the play, then spirits were brought in, and the doctor suggested loo. "Yes, loo," said one.—"Loo, by all means," said another.—"Limited or unlimited?" said a third.—"Whichever you like," said the parson. Limited, however, had the ayes, and everybody being supplied with hot grog, it was evident, from the noise, that the spirits of the party were rising as the spirits in the bottles fell.

"That's a deuced nice little mare of yours, Henly, that you tried to kill to-day," said Davis.

"Yes, she is," said her master.

"I don't believe she can lick my horse, though."

"She can gallop round him," replied the parson.

"Not a bit of it, my friend," replied Charley.

"All that I can tell you is," said the other, "I've got a half sister of hers at home that can't go near so fast, and I will back her to lick your bay any morning."

"Watch the parson," said the doctor, "his blood is getting up through his cloth."

"None of your chaff, old fellow," said Davis; then turning to Henly, "You're sweet on your ponies."

"Ponies, d'ye call 'em?" interrupted Henly with an air of extreme disgust; "you haven't got a horse that can show either of them his tail."

"I was going to say before you interrupted me, that I'll back my horse against either of yours for four miles across country any time."

"What weights?"

"Catch weights."

"Say even weights, and I'm your man; and I will ride my mare, and you your horse, for fifty pounds a side over any course you like."

"Done!" said Davis, "done!"

Here Bob Edwards interfered.

"Hang it, Henly, do you know what you're doing? Why, man, the cloth—you have forgotten your cloth."

"Never mind the cloth," said the parson, in a very excited key, "a bet's a bet."

Eveleyn had listened quietly all this time, and entertaining a kindly feeling towards Henly, who, in spite

of his convivial and sporting tastes, had many excellent traits in his character, it occurred to him that he would offer his services, so as to help his reverence out of the dilemma, which he was hardly in a condition to appreciate, but which next morning might cost him fifty pounds, as he could not possibly outrage *public* opinion by riding a steeple-chase.

"I say, Henly," he said, "I know you are a better horseman than I am, but if you will let me ride the mare for you I shall be very happy to do so."

"That's a plucky offer," said Bob; "and you had better say yes, parson."

"Indeed you had," said another.

"No doubt about it," echoed a fourth.

"Thank you, Eveleyn," said Henly, speaking rather thick, like a man whose apprehension is clouded, "thank you, Eveleyn; if Davis won't object, and you ride equal weights, I'm agreeable. And what do you say, Davis?"

"All serene," rejoined that individual.

Before the party broke up, the weights were arranged, each to ride twelve stone; the course was decided on, and the day fixed, namely, that day fortnight. One by one the guests departed, except Henly, Eveleyn, and the doctor; the two former went to bed, the other slept in the arm-chair, and started on his professional rounds at seven.

CHAPTER VII.

NECK OR NOTHING.

"WHAT do you think of your bet this morning?" said Bob Edwards to Henly, as they and Eveleyn sat at breakfast.

"I think," replied that individual, "that the chances are that your port-wine and grog will be the means of my making a small contribution of a fifty-pound flimsy to the pockets of our friend Charley? What do you think yourself?"

"Well, if you ask my opinion, I fear that your mare is hardly up to the weight; she is fast, I know—faster than the horse, but she's under size. You know her, Eveleyn?"

"Yes, I have seen her out occasionally," said he.

"What's your opinion of her?" asked her owner.

"I think she's up to the weight—I've no fear on that point; but she is a rash fencer, and Davis's horse never makes a mistake. The only doubt on my mind is, will she stand upon her legs?"

"Without a doubt," said the parson, "if you will take her coolly and let the horse lead. But what is your weight, by-the-bye?"

"I usually walk eleven stone ten," said Eveleyn; "but I can take off six or seven pounds in a fortnight; it's only half a pound a day. I shall begin to reduce at once."

"Yes, you must," said Henly; and then, turning to the host, "I say, Bob, jump into your dog-cart and drive Eveleyn over to the Rectory, and have a look at the mare. Will you?"

"By all means, my dear fellow," replied Bob.

"Nonsense," said Eveleyn; "I have my horse here, and we will all ride over together; that's the best plan."

So, without farther parley, the horses were ordered, and the trio took their departure for the Rectory. Many were the comments made upon the mare's appearance after the mishap the day before, but it was very evident that she was all right.

"Indeed," said Henly, "if I had thought Jessie"—(the name of the coal-pit mare)—"was in such good twig, I would have backed her in preference to her sister; but I was afraid there might be some little strain which would prevent her from going into training."

"It's better as it is," said Bob; "and although he is here to hear me, you might have gone a long way to find a better jock than our friend."

"Do not flatter," said Eveleyn; "remember, I have

never ridden a steeple-chase, although I have been accustomed to cross country all my life."

"I've no fear of you, sir," said the parson; "I know your cool style of doing the trick as well as possible."

An hour's ride brought the friends to the parsonage. The chestnut mare was visited, her clothing stripped off; every point criticised. Then the groom took her out, walked her backwards and forwards, while Bob Edwards puckered up his lips, giving his head a knowing shake.

"I'll tell you what, Henly," said he, "I never saw a nicer thing put together in my life; well ribbed up, strong in the loins, immense bone;" and slipping his hand down over her legs, "I had no idea she was so strong; but, my friend, she's a mile too fat."

"I know it," said the parson; "but if there's any virtue in sweating, I'll engage she shall be in better trim this day fortnight."

"Will you let the boy put the saddle on her?" said Eveleyn.

"Certainly," said Henly. "Jim, put the saddle on the mare."

This was done, and a snaffle bit was brought.

"Better have a curb," suggested Eveleyn.

"No," said the parson, "she won't bear it; a child could ride her with a packthread. She has a remarkably tender mouth."

"All the better," said Eveleyn. The mare was brought out. The boy seized the off stirrup to hold it. "Never

mind," said Eveleyn ; and although the mare was as playful as a kitten, not still a moment, he grasped the mane with his left hand and vaulted into the saddle.

The Rectory stood in a large meadow, and thither the party proceeded, Henly and Bob on foot. No sooner had the mare touched the sward than she plunged aside, made two or three buck jumps, and dashed off at speed. The suddenness of the action would have unseated nine horsemen out of ten, but now she carried her master. Letting her have her own way once round the field, the second time Eveleyn held her well in hand, and pressing her during the third circuit, he pulled her up in front of his friends, with dilated eye, her nostril expanded, and the sweat already trickling down.

"Ticklish thing to ride, eh, Eveleyn ?" said Bob.

"Rather so," said Eveleyn.

"It's her way at starting," said Henly, "and I dare say she was not out of the stable yesterday. Try her over a bank or two, will you ?"

Eveleyn made no reply, but trotted off.

"That mare must have a deal of work before she is fit to go," said Bob ; "she is as fat as a bacon pig. I'll tell you what, Henly, you had better send her over to my stables ; it will be handier for Eveleyn to give her her gallops, and beside, it will look better, and then she can go in my name."

"You're very kind," said Henly ; "I could not have asked you, but since you have made the offer, I gladly accept it."

"See, there he goes," said Bob, pointing to Eveleyn, who was cantering the mare at the fence; "not a lighter hand or neater seat in Clayshire."

No sooner was the mare's head turned to the bank than she began to pull; all that Eveleyn did was to steady her; on she went, increasing her speed at every stride, till she sprang over it, only touching it with her hind feet, and landed safely in the next field.

"What a devil of a jump!" said Bob; "if she goes on that way, she must come to grief!"

"I tell you," said the parson, "it is entirely her freshness—from want of work."

"It may be," said Bob, "but that bank was full seven feet high. It's very pretty to look at, but it makes bad work. I should think, though, she would make a splendid hurdle-jumper!"

"You are right," said Henly.

But now their attention was concentrated on the mare and her rider. Eveleyn had been trotting across one or two fields, taking the fences as quietly as he could; but now, warming with the exercise, he marked out a little course for himself, in a circle that would bring him back to his starting-point, and put the mare to work. Gallantly the young creature sprang forward, her tail flashing out behind, and her ears laid back; on she went, taking every jump in her stride—on she went, faster and faster!

"He's racing home!" said Bob, his own eyes flashing with excitement. "Upon my word she gallops

beautifully. Eveleyn is right: if she will but stand upon her legs, she is safe to win." He is coming to the last fence; he presses her too hard. His hat has fallen off—bareheaded, on he comes, his hands well down, his body bent forward; on, on, the mare seems to fly. "Has he a spare neck?" said Bob. The mare rushes at the bank; it is old and rotten; she plants her fore feet on the top; it gives way, and horse and rider roll headlong into the field. "Just what I expected!" said Bob, rushing to the rescue. "Are you hurt, Eveleyn?"

"Not a bit," said he, smiling.

"Is the mare all right?"

"All right," said Henly.

"That's jolly, then," said Bob. "You have both had a good lesson, that will do you more good than a month's training."

"Come in and have some lunch," said the parson—"a glass of beer will do you no harm."

"No, thank you," said Eveleyn, "you forget I have to reduce."

And because his friend could not join him, Bob Edwards also declined, though a glass from the parsonage tap would have been balm to his soul. "I have arranged," said he, turning to Eveleyn, "to take the mare home with me. It will be easier for you to give her a gallop, you know, and then I'll start her in my name. Will you come over to-morrow?"

"No," said Eveleyn, "I fear not; I have an engagement that I cannot forego, on Friday, though, all well,

I will be with you in the morning. And now I must wish you both good day."

"That is a nice young fellow," said Henly, after Eveleyn had left; "I have never seen so much of him as during the last two days; and the more I see the more I like him. To tell you the truth, I always thought him rather bumptious—one of a class of people whom I abhor—but I find I am mistaken."

"Yes," said Bob, "a better fellow than Eveleyn does not live, nor anyone more modest or unassuming. That which many who don't know him take for conceit is nothing more than extreme sensitiveness, which gives him an air of reserve and hauteur, lest people should think him presuming. I don't deny that he is proud—that's his nature, and I like him the better for it; I think it indicates a nobility of feeling, provided it has no leaven of vanity in it."

"Just so," said the parson, who was thinking more about his nag than the character of her intended rider; and leaving them to discuss her merits and demerits and make all their arrangements, we will return with Eveleyn to Bricklinton, which he reached after the usual dinner hour, and was thus enabled to keep his fast unbroken till the evening, and to evade all their questions relative to his prandial meal.

The reducing his weight was the great difficulty he had to contend with, as his usual regular habits always brought him home at meal times; but by going out to friends' houses, and feigning a little indisposition, or rather pleading what he in some degree felt, he

managed to escape dinners for a week. Taking, in addition, tremendous walks round the farm, wrapped up in countless great coats, he soon found that he was getting rid of his superabundant flesh, while his appearance caused no small anxiety to his family, who fancied that his health was giving way, which his father attributed, correctly enough, to excessive exercise, although he little knew the reason for 'the continued exertion, and was half vexed that Eveleyn would not take his advice and lay himself up, although his admonitions approximated very closely to commands.

Eveleyn, as we have said before, had always been accustomed to horse exercise, but he had never ridden either in a flat-race or a steeple-chase, both of which amusements his father had a strong objection to; neither did he thoroughly approve of them himself; and could he with any credit have got out of his rash engagement, he would have done so; not from any sense of fear, but he felt that he was degrading himself in his own eyes by the concealment of his purpose from his father, who never refused him any indulgence that did not transcend the bounds of propriety; and he now knew that he was acting in direct contradiction to his wishes—a kind of disobedience that pained him more, as he felt that he was bound by honour to respect his well-known opinions as much as if they were express commands, if not in a greater degree.

Young England, who have changed all their fathers for gov'nors, would ridicule this idea. Obedience to a parent's views might have done very well in the days

of Moses, but in the nineteenth century—preposterous ! Eveleyn, however, had not attained to that degree of freedom which renders a young man indifferent to the old-fashioned doctrine, as declared in the decalogue. He thought that it did not detract from the moral dignity of adolescence to show some respect to age, some regard to the sentiments of a parent ; and more than once he said within himself, “ I will dare the ridicule of my acquaintance, and tell Henly he must excuse me on principle.” Then vanity made her voice heard : “ What ! make yourself the butt of Clayshire ? —be called a vapourer over your glass, and hear men sneer at your *discretion* ? Fancy Charley Davis’s glorification !” So the voice of wisdom was drowned ; and if she made an attempt to get a hearing, it was all in vain, as long as folly and vanity sat enthroned in his heart. Yet for all that he found them very tyrants, whom he would have banished, but he lacked courage.

Sometimes suggestions of another kind troubled him. “ What if I’m killed ?” But, often as he asked the question, there came no satisfactory answer. Some would say that a man who undertakes to ride a steeple-chase should never reflect. But Eveleyn could not absolve himself from his reflective habits, even if he wished to do so, and he had too often asked himself this question at other times not to do so now. He had no nervous fear of death—no thoughtful man could have less ; but as a reasonable being he considered the subject ; and he was not one to cheat himself with sham solutions of the difficulty. He had

thought less of serious matters lately, until the visit of the Friends had re-awakened his faith ; and, in common with the rest of mankind who are in the enjoyment of perfect health, he was only too prone to leave the future to itself. How swimmingly we all go on in the enjoyment of our petty sins and private indulgences ! We all live like immortals to whom no day of reckoning is at hand, until, probably, a pestilence breaks out, or some dreadful calamity occurs—then we tremble for our own security, and begin to look about us for some place of safety. For whatever men may pretend, no one can calmly reflect on the consequences of death unless he has something more to sustain him than his physical courage or the memory of his few good deeds.

How did Eveleyn act ? Like any other fool ! He drove the question from his mind. But whatever he lacked morally, physically he was rapidly approaching perfection. In ten days he had taken off six pounds ; going to the scales he found no further reduction necessary ; and this result was particularly satisfactory, as he had begun to find his strength giving way ; for, however simple it may appear to a spectator, it requires no small share of stamina to ride four miles across country in twelve or fourteen minutes. The local papers had spread the intelligence far and wide that on the third of November Mr. C. Davis was going to ride his bay horse, Gnostic, against Mr. R. Edwards' chestnut mare, Malibran, for fifty pounds aside ; but somehow the name of the second rider did not appear.

Whether the editor was requested to suppress it, or whether it was an accident, we cannot determine. At anyrate, out of his father's house it was well known that Eveleyn was the man. A steeple-chase in Clay-shire is analogous to the carnival at Rome; it brings all classes together, and is the delight of both nob and snobs. Even a match was sufficient to excite a good deal of interest, and on the morning of the day troops of pedestrians were wending their way to the scene of contest.

The ground for a steeple-chase must be chosen, first, with regard to the public as spectators; secondly, to suit the horses—or, rather, the notions of the stewards; and as long as it presents no extraordinary difficulties, and is commanded by some eminence from whence a good view of the course can be obtained, any locality will answer the purpose. The place chosen on this occasion had often been the scene of similar struggles, and was famous for many an exciting race.

Rather more than half consisted of grass fields, and the remainder stubble. There were two clayey bottoms to cross, but no brook larger than a drain, while in the middle of the area there was a gentle elevation, commanding, with the exception of one of the hollows, a good view of the whole course, which was marked out in the form of an elongated ellipse, and had to be gone over twice. There was no unusual or artificial obstacle, it was a fair hunting country, the jumps consisting entirely of banks, ranging from five to eight feet high, some having a little cover-

ing of thorns and brambles, and others being quite bare.

Two or three ladies on horseback, two or three carriages also tenanted by the fair sex, some scores of squires, farmers, sporting shop-keepers, jockeys, veterinary surgeons, *et hoc genus omne*, and hundreds of people on foot, formed the spectators ; except among the last-named class, there was a good deal of betting. Among the ladies, the usual stakes were freely offered and taken, but the knowing ones were puzzled how to lay their money. There could not be a doubt that the horses would run on the square ; the question then was really one of merit between the antagonists. Davis's Gnostic was well known in the hunting-field as a very steady goer and safe fencer. Then some said the mare was dangerous, but nobody seemed to be very well up as to her character. The men also caused a good deal of discussion ; Davis had won several steeple-chases, and Eveleyn was a raw hand. No one doubted his nerve or his ability, but he lacked experience. The most of the betting was even, but the odds, when given, were against Eveleyn. In some instances, five to three were offered and taken on the horse ; but the mare did not lack backers at even, and Bob Edwards stood to win or lose a cool hundred, having freely taken all he could get on against Davis. About half-past one the horses made their appearance ; shortly after, Bob Edwards drove into the field with Henly and Eveleyn, and in a little while Davis made his appearance on a hack.

"How are you, Eveleyn?" shouted out the latter.
"Could you get any breakfast down this morning?"

"Oh yes, thank you," said Eveleyn. "How are you off for jumping powder?"

"Well, squire," said the doctor to Mr. Howard, who was one of the equestrians, "who is going to win?"

"Upon my soul, you may as well ask my horse," said the former. "There isn't a better man in the hunting-field than young Eveleyn; but he is unaccustomed to this kind of work, and I'm told that Malibran is a fractious, impetuous devil. On the other hand, you know, the horse is as easy to ride as an arm-chair; but I tell you what, I don't like his rider's manner this morning—he is too excited."

"Well," said Ellwood, "I'll back him for a fiver."

"I have no objection," said the squire, "it's the only bet I've made. But look—there they are, going to saddle, let's come down and see how the horses look."

The horse was stripped first, and his appearance elicited a loud hum of approbation. Nothing that art could do had been left undone; in fact, he was in condition at the time the bet was made.

"Does you credit, Davis," said the Squire. "Well turned out of hand, upon my word;" then turning to the doctor, he continued, "He is a little too short, it must tell in his galloping."

"Yes," said the doctor, "but see what power he has—he is all steel and whalebone."

Just then the mare passed them, led by a groom.

"Too fleshy," said the squire.

"But feel how hard it is," said Bob, who had overheard the observation.

The squire grasped her neck, and passed his hand over her side.

"She is too fat, Edwards," re-iterated the little man.

"Well," rejoined Bob, "I grant it; but what would you have said had you seen her a fortnight ago? More could not be done in the time, and she is naturally fleshy. Bar accidents, though, I have no fear of the result. Just look at his face!" pointing at Eveleyn, who was weighing, the scales being placed in a cart. "As cool as a cucumber. If any man can do it, he will!"

The squire nodded assent, for the subject of their conversation was approaching.

"I wish you luck, Eveleyn," said the squire, holding out his hand.

"Thank you," said Eveleyn, grasping it; and turning to his friend Bob, "Isn't it time we were off?" Passing on, he mounted.

Her training had evidently quieted the mare, yet any one who watched her eye could see what a fiery little soul she was.

As he passed through the crowd, Eveleyn ranged his eye along the carriages. He did not expect to see Kate Howard on the field, and yet he would not have been surprised had she been there. A foolish thought flashed across his mind—almost a wish—that she were on the field, and that he might be killed at her feet.

"Idiot that I am," said he to himself, "when shall I learn wisdom?"

"Not in scenes like these!" whispered a still voice.

But the time for sentiment had passed, and he started for his preliminary canter in company with his antagonist, whose colours were yellow cap and jacket with black sleeves: his own, crimson entirely.

A short time elapsed, and amid the silence of the crowd they came to the post.

"Are you ready?" said the gentleman who acted as starter.

"All right," said Davis.

"Off!" The starter dropped his handkerchief, and away went the horses.

They took the first three fences together, the mare, as usual, going very rashly. Then Eveleyn, remembering the injunctions of his friends, allowed the horse to go to the front; and in this order they continued half way round; when Davis, seeing his antagonist's game, gave Gnostic a pull.

"Oh! if that's it," said Eveleyn to himself, "good-bye;" and mending his pace he shot a-head, and soon put nearly a field between himself and his opponent.

"What in the world is he at?" said Henly; "making his running now! He must come to grief; and there's Davis going it as steady as old Time."

"Let him alone," said Bob; "if he can't kill the horse by galloping, he can never beat him by fencing. Look there, now, she made a mistake coming off that bank; anybody but Eveleyn would have been down."

"Here they come! Here they come!" shouted a hundred voices. "Clear the course!" screamed as many more.

The mare, fully a hundred yards in advance, came flashing through the crowd, who greeted the competitors with wild hooras.

"Take your time Eveleyn!" screamed Bob, as he passed. On came Davis, his horse well in hand, though the pace was evidently telling on him; his rider saw that he must get nearer the mare without delay, or his chance of the race would be gone; while, on the contrary, Eveleyn took the advice of his friend, and allowed the horse to gain on him.

"Look at the mare now," said Bob to Henly and some others. "See how she is going; like clockwork, and plenty in her. It's the mare's race. I'll bet my life it's the mare's race. See, Davis is pressing the horse; he can't go the pace! he's done, sir; he's done!"

"Not a bit of it," said the doctor; "there's no mischief with him at present; he's drawing up to the mare every stride; and see how he fences! there now! look at that!"—as a bank was cleared—"can anything be more beautiful?"

"The mare wins!" said Bob.

"Done! for ten pounds she doesn't!" said the doctor.

"Done!" said Bob.

They were now about a mile from home, when Eveleyn thought it time to make a call on the mare. All the spectators could see it.

"He can run away from the horse," said Henly;

"but I hope he won't push her yet." Still on she came, when at the next fence she over-jumped, struck with her hind legs, and, together with her rider, rolled over.

"It's all U P," said Bob, feeling absolutely sick, so intensely interested was he in his friend's success.

Before Eveleyn could disentangle himself, the horse passed him. There was no one near to offer any assistance; and when he got on his feet, and the mare also, he found one strap of the girths broken, and the saddle turned under her belly.

There was no time to rectify the mishap, so he vaulted on to her bare back, and struck the spurs up to the rowel's head in her sides. Besmeared with dirt, his jacket torn, the mare also covered with mud—more like some wild Indian than a gentleman Jock—Eveleyn dashed forward, feeling assured that if the mare would but stand he must win yet. From where the accident had taken place to the winning-post was down hill, until within about three hundred yards, when the ground rose again. Mid-way up this incline was the last fence, leaving a short run in, which was greatly to the advantage of the horse. Eveleyn remembered this, and knew, if he could not catch his opponent before he entered the winning field, there would be but little chance left. It was quite clear to everyone that the horse had had enough, but the mare was a long way behind; yet when Eveleyn's friends saw how she slipped over the ground, going two feet for her antagonist's one, they still had hope. Again

the crowd shouted, "Here they come!" and as the horses came nearer, and the result of Eveleyn's mishap became apparent, they roared out—

"Red Jacket has lost his saddle!"

"So he has!" said the doctor.

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the parson.

"He doesn't want it!" screamed Bob in ecstasy.

On they come! the seconds seem minutes, the minutes hours; every eye is strained; scarcely a word is spoken; an earthquake would have rolled away unheeded! They reach the bottom.

"The horse wins! the horse wins!" said a hundred voices; and again the same shouts of "Clear the course! Clear the course!" sounded over the field. Not twenty yards behind came the mare, her rider bare-headed, his knees pressed into her sides. All coolness and judgment thrown overboard, he rode over the fences as if they were plain ground.

"She must fall!" said everyone; but the fury of her speed carried her over everything, as if she had wings rather than legs. On she comes! every stride diminishes the distance between her and her antagonist, and whip and spur cannot drive the horse faster.

On they come! they near the last fence! It was patent to the spectators that the race would be practically decided there; and dense masses of eager people thronged the bank on either side of the flag-post that marked the place where the final leap was to be taken.

The horse is not half a length a-head. Davis madly urges him on; he gallantly rushes at the bank, and

tops it. But as the mare approaches, her rider strikes her with all his force across the shoulder, raises her at it, and the gallant creature, gathering up her strength, fairly clears it at a bound, and lands as far a-head on the other side as she was behind in the last field. !

“Well done, by —— !” roared the multitude.

This was the crowning effort. Malibran passed the post three lengths in advance !

Not all sincere were the congratulations that were showered on Eveleyn. Many of the backers of the horse wished to appear magnanimous ; but they bore their losses with an indifferent grace, inwardly cursing the victor.

“Well done, old boy !” said Bob.

“The pluckiest riding I ever saw !” said the squire.

“You’re a brick !” said the parson.

“Thank you all !” said Eveleyn ; and turning to Bob, “Come, let us be off.”

Driving out of the field while yet the applause of the spectators rung in his ear, “Surely,” he said to himself, as he surveyed the uncultured, unthinking mass, “if the merit of winning a steeple-chase is appreciated by such as these, I have accomplished nothing to be proud of. Great as is the interest evinced now, there would have been more excitement had I broken my neck, and I should have probably attained equal fame with the mare had she also been killed. A fate worthy of an immortal !”

When he entered his father’s dining-room that evening, after having changed his clothes, he found the old gentleman, as usual, seated in his arm-chair.

"Is that you, my boy?"

"Yes, father."

"Where have you been all day, and what have you been doing?"

"I have been at Handley End, and I have been acting the fool's part."

"What do you mean?"

"Risking my neck for nothing!"

"I don't understand you."

"Well, I have been riding a steeple-chase!"

"You!"

"Yes, I myself!"

"I thought, Eveleyn, you knew how much I disapprove of them?"

"Yes, father, and you are right; and I have now to tell you that I have ridden my first and last!"

"How did you make this rash engagement?"

Eveleyn related the whole particulars.

"I thought you had more discretion," said his father; "and I fear I have not done my duty in allowing you to indulge your taste for field sports."

"I can only tell you that the experiment of this day will never be repeated."

"I accept that as a promise," said his father, who, while he sincerely detested the brutalizing sport, nevertheless could not help acknowledging a feeling of gratification that his son had been successful.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNTY BALL.

WHAT impulsive creatures we are when in the hey-day of youth and spirits ! We read the stirring annals of a campaign, and the lust of military glory fires our imaginations. We gaze at the picture of the year, wrapt in admiration ; and if we imagine that we possess some little touch of the painter's genius, lo ! we resolve to shine in art.

Now the grave eloquence of some majestic preacher stirring the inmost depths of our souls, wakes the desire to devote our lives to God, and to the promulgation of his truth.

Now the soft beauty of some young girl's face tunes all our hearts to love, and every thought is centered in the idea of domestic happiness.

Again, the dangerous companionship of the thoughtless or the fast man fascinates us, and prompts the idea of imitation. At last, in process of time, the fermentation subsides, and leaves us resting on the dregs of life, clear, and fit for use, only because the agitation

has ceased, yet liable to be disturbed again by every passing thunder-cloud.

Is all blind chance? Is all mere accident? Or is all design? Who shall declare it? Who can unriddle the mystery of life, big with such infinite results, pregnant with such apparent contradictions? Does the man make himself? or is he ever being made—fashioned spiritually by spiritual hands? Yes, or no?

Echo answers, "Yes, or no!"

"From out waste places comes a cry."

How a great love purifies the heart! Though it be a faint and far-off image of the highest love, it is nevertheless a reflection of it, though seen only in the dim mirror of a human soul!

This had been the master-spell of Eveleyn's life; it had attended him like a good genius, prompting him to noble deeds, and preserving him in purity of living; but this joy-filled vase was shattered, and the precious nectar spilled. Eveleyn had loved truly, and he had loved in vain. This discovery not only pained but changed him; he felt himself to be a different being, not chastened, but angered and defiant.

The great hope of his life had been destroyed, and he had not only suffered the loss of that which he valued most, but a sustaining principle had perished in the wreck. It is true he read and wrote, but he had lost all method, and frequently he found the solitude of his room insupportable, and the society of the vicious and the frivolous soon became less distasteful to him.

Occasionally his better moods returned, as we have seen in his reflections before and after the steeple-chase, but he grew daily more and more the creature of impulse, rushing hither and thither like a riderless horse. This state of feeling, acting on his conduct, rendered him more popular than he had ever been among the young men of Bricklinton, who, when they found that Eveleyn did not entirely discard loo, and now and then joined in a game of pool, pronounced it as their opinion "that he was not a bad sort of fellow, take him altogether." Not that Eveleyn derived any pleasure from associating with them, except that it quieted his restlessness for a time; but as he could not perpetually talk slang, join in low wit, and swear unending oaths, he became disgusted with his associates, and though he did not avoid them, he secretly despised them for their wilful ignorance and systematic viciousness. Had he at this period of his life been thrown into the society of those witty profligates whose conversation is tinged with philosophy, pleasing though false, seductive though dangerous, and whose immorality, coloured with sentiment, and surrounded with politeness, is the very poesy of sin, he would inevitably have been lost, but vice displayed in all its coarseness and brutality disgusted him.

About this time the annual hunt ball was to take place in Bricklinton. Now hunt balls and assemblies in small county towns are the selectest gatherings in the world, according to the current notion of selectness entertained by the set who frequent them. Human

nature is pretty much alike in Paris and Peking, and the set in one county town bears a familiar likeness to the set in another, so that the inference may be fairly drawn that when we speak of one we speak of all; for, as the sailor expresses it, "they are all tarred with the same brush."

To have the *entrée*, then, at the balls, to be recognised as one of the *habitués*, was the distinction in Bricklinton which marked a lady or gentleman. "Who is Mistress or Miss So-and-so? Are they visited?"—"Dear me!"—"Yes, they attend the balls."—"Who is Mr. Blank?"—"I don't know, I have never seen him at the balls." The privilege of being permitted to undergo the purgatory of one of these entertainments was, in fact, a patent of gentility. A family might be ignorant, or vulgar, or in debt, it mattered not, they are gentlefolks—you meet them at the balls. A man might *squint*, might be fast, might have his literature bounded by the racing calendar, his reputation measured by his success as a rider, yet if he was accepted at the balls, he must be a *gentleman*.

A certain devil was walking up and down Bricklinton, looking for apartments to let. He had been brought up in the court of Terpsichore, and having lost his health by a century's diligent attendance at the ballet, he thought he would try country air. Very much disgusted at the paucity of entertainments of the kind of which he was a *familiar*, he wandered from town to town, still more distressed to find so little occasion for his services in the provinces, so many of

his family having preceded him. When he had almost thought of trying a season at Cremorne or the Highbury Barn as the nearest approach to rural life he was likely to attain, he accidentally met Eveleyn, and perceiving that an opportunity offered, he instantly made his acquaintance.

His victim was at once seized with an irrepressible desire to appear at the next ball; why, he could not tell, but still he felt he must go. In vain he argued the point with himself. "They won't have you; why will you thrust yourself where you are not wanted?" His better genius whispered, "Vanity." This made him angry, and using strong language, he repelled the insinuation. "But wherefore mortify yourself, Eveleyn? There cannot be any pleasure in looking at a lot of women dancing, whom you would not dare to ask to dance with you, because your assurance would be treated with cool impertinence. It is absolute folly to subject yourself to the civil insults of people who, although in your self-sufficiency you pretend to regard them as your inferiors, still, you know from experience, have the power to sting you to the quick through your pride. Surely you do not mean to become a tuft-hunter, and devote your life to creeping up the social ladder by sheer perseverance, deaf to sarcasm, and blind to intentional neglect? Success is possible by these means, provided you have money to support your pretensions. You may get on like that creature whom you despise (never mind his name); his father was a tanner, and the son must be a gentleman; so he attends

all the races, and subscribes to every sporting object for which money is asked. He never misses an assembly; and though for years nobody ever saw him dancing except with one or two wall-flowers who despised him, yet he is beginning to be recognised as part of the furniture of the room, and will, ere long, be tolerated as an outsider.

It was clearly a case of demoniac possession, so he made up his mind to go. Poor fellow! he fancied he was a voluntary agent in the matter.

The veritable Thursday at last arrived, and about half-past ten o'clock Mr. Eveleyn Evelyn, a little to his surprise, found himself one of the gay assemblage at the Bricklinton county ball. His *entrée* made no sensation; it was a question if anybody saw him; that everybody was perfectly indifferent to his presence, was the first flattering observation he made. He began to quote Byron—

“But mid the hum, the crowd, the shock of men”—

when he encountered the shock of a pair of energetic waltzers who sent him staggering against the wall, while the gentleman remarked to the lady, loud enough for him to hear, “Some people, naturally awkward, are always in the way.”

Ah, Master Eveleyn, a private party like that one given by Mrs. Ethelfield may be trying, very trying, to the inhabitants of the debateable land between aristocracy and snobocracy, but it is not comparable to the ordeal of a county ball. In the former you can always fall back

on somebody, and for the host's sake none will be likely to insult you. The fiction that those who meet as guests at the same house are for the time equals, may be permitted to exist in the form of an abstract proposition, but in a county assembly you stand upon your own foundation. It is a social crucible, where the homogeneous metal fuses into one, and where the dross is separated. Sympathy is unknown, good nature is a bore; and if you can in any way mortify a neighbour, or excite the jealousy of a friend, you fulfil the primary use of the institution, and gratify your secret soul.

Those men whom he knew nodded as they passed, but nobody stopped to speak, every one seemed so engrossed with his partner; and as for the women, they did not look at him—at least he could not catch an eye turned in his direction.

"I wonder," he thought, "where the stewards are?" The fact was, Eveleyn laboured under the delusion that these individuals had duties to perform, and that they fulfilled them, and for some time he was in expectation of seeing old Sir Fotheringay Helpmeete coming up and offering to introduce him to a partner; but neither he nor his colleague seemed to have any intention of doing so, and by degrees the truth dawned on Eveleyn's mind, that as far as dancing was concerned he might as well be converted into one of the bronze statues that held candles in the vestibule.

Once or twice he thought he would go up and ask some of his acquaintance to introduce him to a partner; but, after a moment's reflection, he could not make up

his mind to acknowledge his social inferiority by asking to be introduced to young girls, some of whom positively lived in the same street where stood his father's house. To leave the ball would have been to acknowledge his defeat, and gratify the spleen of all who knew him. So he determined to stay it out, and strolled towards the card-room.

Just as he was standing at the door of this last-named apartment, Charley Davis passed him, with a lady on his arm.

"Who is that?" said his partner to him.

"My late antagonist," he replied.

"Young Evelyn! Is that he?" said the lady.

"No less," rejoined Charley.

"He is exceedingly handsome; by far the best looking man in the room. You must introduce him."

"You are jesting," said Charley.

"No, on my word I am not," said the lady.

And as she made the circuit of the room the second time, she stared so at Eveleyn that he felt the blood rushing up into his face.

Mrs. Aylmer was a young married woman of four-and-twenty, of unusual personal attractions; and as she promenaded the room she glided rather than walked, her movements were so graceful. Her eyes were of the deepest blue, and her light hair, naturally wavy, was worn plain. Her complexion was the clearest and most transparent white, without a particle of colour, so that her beauty wore almost a supernatural expression.

"Remember," said she to Davis, as he gave her up to his next partner, tapping him on the arm with her fan. "Remember!"

"I will soon prove how completely I am your slave," said he.

And immediately he walked up to Eveleyn, and shook hands.

"I say, old fellow," said he, "how is it you are not dancing?"

"The evening is young yet," said Eveleyn.

"Come, I'll introduce you to a good partner."

And, taking him up, he presented him in due form to Mrs. Aylmer, who engaged herself to him for the second succeeding waltz.

This little incident in the drama of the evening had passed so rapidly, that when Eveleyn returned to his position near the door of the card room, it seemed as if it were a dream rather than a fact; but, as he was heartily tired of his inaction, he could not feel sufficiently grateful to Charley Davis for what he believed to be his disinterested attention. Could he have heard the dialogue between the mother, who had witnessed the affair, and her son, his opinion as to Mr. Charles Davis's kindness might have undergone a change.

"What mad freak," said Mrs. Davis, of Waterpark (it was she), "have you been at now, Charley?"

"Gratifying the feelings of a young woman, ma'am!" said that young gentleman.

"For shame, sir! What do you mean?"

"The old colonel's a long way from home, and Mrs. Aylmer admires beauty—in my sex!"

"Charles, you are incorrigible."

"I wish you thought so" (said the dutiful son),
"and would give me up as a bad job!"

"To whom next will you introduce that young man,
I wonder! Why, the very room smells of paper."

"Of what kind, ma'am? I haven't smelt a bank note
for a long time, and should relish the flavour."

"Charles," said the lady, "do not talk nonsense. I
don't approve of your patronising such people. If you
choose to know them in the billiard-room or hunting
field, well and good; but in society, never!"

"Just so," said the son, whose notions were equally
exclusive, but he could not help bantering his mother
notwithstanding.

"Really," continued the lady, "if we do not set our
faces against the innovating spirit of the age, we shall
have the shop boys who serve us with gloves in the
morning squeezing our hands at night."

"Few of your sex," said the son, "object to our
pressing attentions!"

"Nonsense, Charles! I was going to say that, if
you bring this young man forward, every fellow will
imagine he has a right to come here if he keeps a
mill."

"And you," replied the son, "wish to delay that
millenium as long as possible."

"You are wicked, Charles."

"Can you tell me," said the son, "what's the differ-
ence between young Evelyn and a broken jaw tooth?"

"No."

"Well, one is a ragged grinder, and the other is a grinder of rags. Ha, ha ! ha, ha !"

And the elegant young man hurried off to claim his partner for the quadrille.

The waltz was over with Mrs. Aylmer. Eveleyn, feeling a little nervous at first, had succeeded, on the whole, in acquitting himself to his own and his partner's satisfaction. He was a good dancer, but having generally practised in private houses, it was with some difficulty that he accommodated himself to the length of the room, and for the first turn or two he failed to keep the circle, and found that he was revolving in a much narrower orbit than the rest. In a very short time, though, he was as expert as the oldest *habitué*, and it was with extreme regret that he heard the last strains of the air die away.

"I suppose," said his partner, "you know everybody in the room?"

"Indeed I do not!" said Eveleyn—"on the contrary, I am a stranger to almost every lady present."

"I thought you were a native?"

"So I am."

Then there was a little pause.

"I suppose," said Eveleyn, "you wish to know how I can be a native of this town and not know the people?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Aylmer.

"I might," replied Eveleyn, "give you many reasons, but one will suffice, and that is, I am considered a *parvenu*!"

"You a *parvenu*!" said the lady, with a look of surprise.

"Yes! And why not?"

"I never make flattering speeches," was the answer. The inference, though, was sufficient for Eveleyn. "I appreciate your frankness," said Mrs. Aylmer, "and therefore I should like to know a little more about you."

Eveleyn smiled, and satisfied her curiosity.

"I see we shall be friends," said the lady. "I hate affectation, and detest stuck-up people—and of both these commodities there is an abundance in Bricklington. Come, let us inspect the good people around us;" and leaning on his arm they joined the promenaders.

"Who is that delicious-looking old lady in the corner, robed in black velvet, with an original head-dress between a turban and the coiffure of an Italian peasant woman—and oh! tell it not at Almack's, a muff, good heavens! a sable muff?"

"That is Lady Fotheringay Helpmeete, one of the county swells," said Eveleyn.

"Poor thing! I know it's very rude to make remarks, but I devoutly trust she may meet the gaze of Madame Tussaud."

"I am sure she understands you," said Eveleyn; "she is anticipating your idea, by waxing pale."

Miss Aylmer deigned to smile.

"Do you believe," said Eveleyn, "in the inborn gentility of which some boast, and which others reverence as a creed?"

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Aylmer: "it is one of

the old-fashioned delusions of the exclusives, arising out of an intensity of selfishness, to lay claim to inherited superiority; on the contrary, some of the most gentlemanly men I have met are persons who did not know who their grandfathers were; and some of the most vulgar could boast of what the Spaniards call blue blood. The difference is simply one of education. I do not mean the education of the schools only, but the education of association. I admit, though, that some men are of purer metal than others; and when one of the base sort happens to be born in the higher ranks, he is tolerated, and passes as genuine, though in reality he is counterfeit; whereas, had his birth-place been a garret, he would have been naturally a costermonger. Change two children—rear the peasant as the peer, and vice versâ, and you would never detect the trick.”

“You express my own convictions,” said Eveleyn; “but few have the courage to say so who are born within the pale.”

“The spirit of inquiry,” said Mrs. Aylmer, “is omnipresent, and whatever notion will not hold water must be thrown aside.”

“Yes,” replied her companion, “I plead guilty to contemplating with malicious pleasure the iconoclast, as he walks through the temple of time destroying the cherished images that men have paid their vows to through hoary centuries.”

“Why malicious?” said the lady.

“Because, being not one of the great myself, it flatters my pride to see that men have been dupes so long in choosing the shadow for the substance.”

"Ah," said Mrs. Aylmer, "you are envious, then?"

A gentleman now came up to claim the lady's hand for the quadrille which was being formed.

"May I ask," said she, "if you are engaged for the next?"

The gentleman stared, referred to his card, and answered in the negative.

"Then you will do me a favour," said Mrs. Aylmer, "if you will let our engagement stand over."

The gentleman bowed.

"And now," said she, turning to her companion, "find me a seat."

Eveleyn escorted her to the tea-room, where there was an empty couch, which they occupied.

"We were talking," said she, "of old fallacies, if I remember right; and you were lauding the inquisitive spirit of the age. But where will it end?"

"I do not know that we have any right to ask that question," said Eveleyn. "If we follow truth, we must not tremble because it leads us through darkened ways. The sunrise will come, sooner or later. Let us have patience, and work."

"That has ever been the apology for error in all time," said the lady.

"What certain people call error," replied Eveleyn; "but compelled as we all are to grope like blind-worms, it is not strange that we should sometimes err. This very misfortune of blindness necessitates the search; and if we get upon a wrong track, eventually the mistake will be discovered. I fear no evil from the quest of truth;

though creeds be shattered, though faiths fail, though deeply-loved opinions are scattered to the wind, yet this age, or some other age, will, from the mighty ruins of the past, erect a glorious temple, where all men shall bow down and worship, and every tongue confess the triumph of the universal mind."

"You talk vaguely," said his companion; "what mean you by this triumph? Define it."

"It embraces," said Eveleyn, "all things—it ranges through every department of thought, and it will find expression in art, science, politics, literature, social life, and religion."

"And ethics," said the lady.

"The laws of ethics," replied Eveleyn, "have long since been discovered; they are immutable. In their application, though, there will be a change, and the impossible now, will be the rule hereafter. First, though, the intellect must advance, and, pioneer-like, prepare the way for moral truth, proving that we are capable of better things than the many now suppose."

"In the meantime, what will become of those who have fallen by the way? It seems to me that the road you depict is like the soldier's path to glory—over the bodies of his comrades—only yours is over the souls of the myriad multitude which pave the approach to your temple."

"It is impossible," said Eveleyn, "to answer your question in the present state of knowledge; but we learn this fact—as our researches become deeper—that chance nowhere exists, and the wildest apparent confusion is in

reality referable to law and order; neither, as I said before, is there any occasion to ask what will be the consequences! We framed not the laws which govern our actions, neither are we responsible for the development of thought peculiar to each cycle, which depends upon a sequence of events, the disposition of which has never been entrusted to those whom it directly affects. The present must live for the future—it is the necessity of being. And as the rivers carry down to the sea the seed of ‘continents to be,’ so shall the product of our labours and speculations be hereafter made apparent in what, compared with the existing world, shall be called ‘a new earth.’”

There was a long pause, which Mrs. Aylmer broke, by asking, “Have you any sisters, Mr. Evelyn?”

“Only one.”

“Has she not come out yet?”

“No.”

“Is she pretty?”

“Some say so.”

“I should like to see her.”

“I shall be happy to introduce you.”

The quadrille was over, and with it their *tête-à-tête*.

“There is an illustration of my theory,” said Mrs. Aylmer, pointing to a stout lady who entered the room at that moment on the arm of an elderly gentleman. “Look at that turban, at that avalanche of lace, those countless trinkets, that face, which has less expression than her bust, and yet the proprietor of all these disadvantages imagines herself to be the *crème de la crème*

of society in Clayshire. I assure you my cook is far more intellectual, far more attractive, and more lady-like ; yet the parents of the one go back to the Plantagenets, and the other is a peasant's child——Here comes my partner !”

“ Are you engaged for the next waltz ?” asked Eveleyn.

“ I shall not stay for it.”

“ May I see you to your carriage, then ?”

The lady bowed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIVER WALK.

SINCE we first made the acquaintance of the Evelyn family, there had been an addition made to its inmates in the person of Miss Grierson, the governess who had been selected to complete Lilla's education, by teaching her drawing on incorrect principles, and imparting an English version of the French and German languages. This lady was not in any way remarkable, but it is necessary that the reader should be made acquainted with the fact of her existence.

About two o'clock the morning after the ball, Eveleyn might have been seen walking down Main Street, evidently dressed with care. His clothes were from London, his gloves and boots from Paris. A critic might have called him an exquisite ; but whenever he appeared in public his toilet was unexceptionable.

The principal resort of the fashionables of Bricklinton

was either up and down the pavement in front of the shops in Main Street, or else a little way out of the town by the banks of the river, where a dry gravelled pathway, bounded by elm-trees, afforded room for three or four abreast. Thither Eveleyn bent his steps. It was a fine morning in November, the wind southerly, the sky cloudless, and the air as soft as in spring. Eveleyn reached the River Walk (as it was called); it was deserted; not even a nursemaid disturbed the solitude. He slowly strolled on to the end, turned and retraced his steps, reached the point from which he started, and turned again. Young men seldom go out to walk by the side of rivers dressed in Bond Street style merely for the pleasure of enjoying their own society. Eveleyn having been uninterrupted in his reflections for the space of half an hour, it was with a feeling of relief, and a little throb of excitement, that, as he was turning one of the angles in the promenade, he heard footsteps approaching. "Here she comes," he said to himself; but lo! it proved to be a woman bearing on her head a tub of tripe.

The reader will suppose that Eveleyn had an appointment; if he entertains such an idea, we beg to disabuse his mind at once. Eveleyn had no appointment—positively none. It is true he expected to meet somebody by accident; for what man is so bound up in the belief of universal arrangement as altogether to have banished from his mind the idea of experiencing a happy chance?

Half an hour after Eveleyn had passed down

Main Street, a handsomely dressed lady might have been seen walking in the same direction. By the merest chance, she, too, chose to explore the River-walk; and when she arrived at the end nearest the town, she, too, found the promenade forsaken; but as it was sinuous, she did not know who might be hidden by one of the bends. Naturally inquisitive, she determined to gratify her curiosity, and hearing footsteps as she proceeded, "Here is some one coming," she said to herself; and lo! the woman whom we have before seen turned the corner.

"Horrible!" said the lady, walking on faster. By this time Eveleyn had made his third turn, and was again approaching the town end of the walk. The lady was proceeding in the opposite direction, and thus they met. She turned. Eveleyn raised his hat. The lady slackened her pace; Eveleyn in politeness drew up.

"Is not the soft air from the river very pleasant, Mrs. Aylmer?"

"I cannot agree with you," said she, "it chills me; but then I have been so long accustomed to an Indian climate that I do not appreciate the softness you feel."

It is impossible to keep a lady standing, so Eveleyn turned with her. Of course it was not a preconcerted arrangement; Eveleyn, it is true, had casually mentioned that the path by the river was very sheltered and quiet, and Mrs. Aylmer had incidentally observed that she was fond of walking, and hated sauntering about a town. Thus, by a fortuitous concurrence of cir-

cumstances, these young people found themselves in each other's society again, after an interval of a few hours.

Though neither of them was taciturn, both seemed at a loss for a theme ; Eveleyn having made the usual inquiry as to whether the lady had recovered from the exertions of the ball, and being told in reply "that dancing never tired her," his imagination seemed to be exhausted.

The truth was, he felt the awkwardness of the *tête-à-tête* ; had he met Mrs. Aylmer in the society of half-a-dozen mutual friends, he would have chattered away glibly enough ; but now that he enjoyed an opportunity which he had looked forward to since they had parted on the preceding night, he did not know how to commence, or what subject to select.

The lady began to think that she had an exceedingly dull companion, but remembering how agreeable he had made himself in the ball-room, and having far more experience of the world, she determined to lead him on. Knowing that nine hundred and ninety-nine persons out of every thousand can talk about themselves, even if they can approach no other theme, she commenced by saying maliciously—

"Do you often come here to enjoy the pleasures of meditation?"

"No, not often—why should you think so?"

"Because I fancied that, in pursuance of old habit, you were lost in reflection."

"You are sarcastic, Mrs. Aylmer."

"Such is not my nature," replied the lady, smiling.

"Ah!" said Eveleyn, "you must not expect too much vivacity in a Clayshire farmer. The soil is heavy—our horses are heavy—our rents are heavy—and universal heaviness weighs upon our natures. We have nothing light but our pockets."

"And hearts!" said the lady.

"Not all," replied Eveleyn.

"Not all!" echoed Mrs. Aylmer with a sigh. "The sun never rises but it sets on some dead hope; the stars never shine but they look down upon some fresh blighted life; the moon never wanes but with it some love perishes; the wind never blows but it bears some tale of woe; and over all flows the ocean of time, its surface smooth and unruffled, hiding within its depths the secrets of men's lives and the traces of their pain, just as I have seen the sea come sweeping into some tidal harbour, spreading a mantle of blue water over the black mud and putrifying horrors that rested on and in it."

Eveleyn was puzzled. Romantic himself, he liked romance in others; but his situation was a novel one—his companion was a married woman, and he could not forget the fact; besides, he was young, and his experience of the sex was limited; and well it is that youths of twenty cannot know all that they acquire in the ten succeeding years.

"You speak bitterly, Mrs. Aylmer."

"I suppose you would say," she replied, "that I take a morbid view of life, and you have doubtless ready a

string of platitudes to advance: about looking at the bright side—that the sum of happiness is greater than the amount of misery—an opinion in which you have the authority of Paley to support you, citing perhaps his story about the ecstatic shrimps. Oh, I know all the twaddle that is talked and written on the subject; but of mental suffering and anxiety, were every throb measured, and pang known—were the mask completely torn off—you would start back in terror.”

“I fear, Mrs. Aylmer, that you confound common cares with absolute suffering; do you not remember what Young says?

“Cares and employments, and without employ,
The soul—”

“Pardon me,” said his companion, interrupting him, “I have no faith in Young. The abstractions of reason are not capable of solving the mysteries of the heart. You might as well expect a Newton, in virtue of his mathematical knowledge, to become a Handel, as suppose that these sensations, these inner-life experiences, are to be explained away by philosophic subtilty. Discord prevails over harmony; revelation declares it, and history confirms it. We cheat ourselves into the belief of our happiness, because there is no remedy for the wear and tear of the soul, which becomes dimmed and defaced from being trodden down in the streets, and crushed by the wheels of Time’s chariot—”

“Mrs. Aylmer,” interposed Eveleyn.

She did not attend, but continued—“Doubtless you

think it extraordinary that I should talk in this manner to you. But, from the tone of your conversation last night, I know you can understand me, although you may not either agree with or approve of my opinions ; and when I meet with a person like yourself, to whom I can speak, fear of transcending the bounds of conventionalism never restrains me from saying what I feel. And in this matter I speak from actual knowledge—for though probably not many months your senior, experiences have been concentrated in my life sufficient to extend over double the number of years in ordinary existences.”

“It is just as I expected,” said Eveleyn ; “you make your own life the measure of all others, and from the facts of a few years, as known by yourself, you arrive at generalizations which you apply universally. I cannot doubt your experiences, but your method is wrong fundamentally. But even suppose your position was unassailable, what satisfaction do you derive from dwelling on such painful conclusions ?”

“None whatever,” said Mrs. Aylmer, “and I cannot tell what induced me to thrust my opinions upon you.”

“I hope you do not regret having done so ?” said Eveleyn.

“Only inasmuch,” she replied, “as I regret appearing egotistical.”

“You cannot be otherwise,” said Eveleyn, “in dealing with such a subject, since you have only yourself to experiment upon. You cannot take the minds of other persons and anatomise them. On the contrary, you

look within, and what you see there you imagine is to be found in other minds ; and from the premises furnished by yourself, you deduce arguments which you fancy must be applicable to the human race."

"Ah, Mr. Evelyn, women feel truths which you arrive at by some tortuous logical process. You cannot appreciate the method we employ ; but our conclusions are none the less true because we sometimes fail to give what you deem a sufficient reason for our opinions. Our lives are bound up in the emotions—they are to us what space is to nature. In them we are contained, alas for us ! All that affects them we can best judge of ; it is our peculiar sphere, and none but women know what women suffer, if in nothing else, in their constant sacrifices at the shrine of Baal, when they allow themselves to be divorced from their true spiritual life by taking on themselves vows which cannot be fulfilled."

Evelyn thought to himself—"This pretty woman has taken a great deal of trouble to tell me that she has made an unhappy marriage ; and it will be better for both if we change the subject."

"Is it your intention," he said, "to stay long in Bricklington ?"

"I hardly know," said Mrs. Aylmer ; "I was obliged to come to England with my little girl, as well as for my own health. If I find that the place suits me, probably I shall stay here some time. Then my father's sister lives here, and that is also an inducement ; but I must confess, from what I saw of the *haut ton* of Clayshire last night, I fear I shall

neither be liked nor like the people. It is such an atrocious waste of time to give up one's whole life to the kennel and the stable ; and, with scarcely an exception, every partner who was introduced to me at the ball had no conversation other than local gossip or sporting affairs, for which glorious consummation my sex is responsible."

"How so?" said Eveleyn; "you are hard on the ladies."

"You may be assured," was the reply, "that if the women would not condescend to such themes, the men would soon soar above them ; but when you find ladies emulating jockeys in their knowledge of horses, and peripatetic sempstresses in their love of gossip, the men will be found to be but little superior, if not worse than they are." Then, suddenly changing the subject, she asked if Eveleyn liked poetry.

"Yes," he said, "I do."

"And who is your favourite author?"

"Byron! unhesitatingly."

"I like that confession," said Mrs. Aylmer. "Most young men of your age say Shakespeare ; but it is only affectation. They get up half-a-dozen quotations, and put the volumes on the shelf, where they lie unopened for years. But then it is the fashion to talk of the 'Swan of Avon,' 'Glorious Will.' Mind, I do not disparage Shakespeare, I only say he is not generally read ; his dramas are rapidly approaching the position occupied by the old Greek plays, masterpieces of art, models of style, and so forth, which every one admits

to be perfect. But they have no influence on the public mind, they are no longer a power in the moral world. They are a divine expression, but the expression of a higher life than is common. Now no poetry can be truly said to live, unless it is the perfect form of the present thought, the harmonious utterance and complete reflex of the mental condition of its age. Now such, to most, is Byron's poetry. You may say perhaps its influence is evil, but that is the fault of the time. Among a literary people, every circle must have its poetic interpreter; and this the author of 'Childe Harold' is for his era, though I find more sympathy in Shelley."

"You do not mean to say," said Eveleyn, "that you think Byron and Shelley superior to the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare?"

"No," replied Mrs. Aylmer, "certainly not. What I say is, that these poets, having caught the inspiration of their own age, are more to the taste of the public than the others; and naturally so, because they are imbued with the prevailing tone. For example, a people devoted to incessant warfare, like the early Greeks, must have had their Homer. The barbaric ages have their bards burning with martial fire, that inspired the old ballad poetry. Then Italy has her Ariosto and her Dante; the one giving expression to the potency of the Romish creed, the other to the chivalric idea. Later, our own Shakespeare stands foremost in our Augustan age of letters, and the era that produced a Bacon would not have been complete without a mind which,

in the realm of poetry, should exhibit corresponding power to that displayed by the father of modern philosophy in his own sphere. Puritanism gave us Milton. The viciousness of the Stuarts ensured the world a Dryden, and growing scepticism brought forth its Pope, and afterwards its Goethe in Germany, until we are carried down to our own day, when the extended range of modern thought gives us Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, Scott, the Lake School, Moore, Keats, and a host of others."

"Your argument," said Eveleyn, "if I understand you rightly, is, that the age makes the poet, and not the poet the age. Though he may draw his incidents from the past, the pervading spirit must be of the present. What then do you argue for the future of poetry? Has it yet to reach its climax, or has it passed its zenith?"

Mrs. Aylmer bent down her head, as if reflecting before she answered. After a little while, she began in a low soft voice: "To believe in the future greatness of our race, in the still vaster attainments of the human mind, in its gradual expansion, even beyond what we *now* know to be possible, is the creed of the noblest souls; and in this great worship I would be a votary, though only in the outer gates of the temple. But whether this greatness comprehends nobler, purer, grander poetry than we now possess, I doubt."

"Wherefore?" said Eveleyn.

"Because, as knowledge grows, we obtain the demonstration of truths that we once guessed at;

truths of religion, philosophy, and science ; so that we become possessed of facts which our fathers yearned to secure, and dimly grasped at through the dark. Imagination formerly outstripped reason. Reason will eventually surround imagination, I mean the healthy imagination of the honest poet, not the imagination of the lunatic that transcends the possible. Now poetry is the expression of the grandest thought, the aspiration of sublime souls after all that is more true, more noble, and more beautiful than we possess ; but the time will come when men will enjoy the reality of what the past aspired to. In giving this as my opinion, you must bear in mind that the only grand unwritten poetry must be the inspiration of philosophy. This is the proposition from which I start. The changes have been rung on all the aspects of nature, I might almost say *ad nauseam*. In this sphere all that remains is to reclothe old ideas in different words, and to find fresh turns of expression for that which has been already better said. There is something yet to be done in mere versification, in the musical arrangement of words, so that poetasters will not immediately die out for lack of employment."

"You hold out little hope for future bards," said Eveleyn.

"I do," replied Mrs. Aylmer. "Sometimes I think that their vocation is gone ; at any rate, you will agree with me their power is declining. The age of shadows and phantasms is passing ; the dawn of realism is at hand. In childhood the unreal fascinates us ; in manhood we are content with the actual, and are

satisfied with no progress that is not a substantial advance. Poetry flourishes in a time of universal dreaming, when through the cloud-racks of ignorance flashes of the heavenly light startle the beholders with their splendour. But by degrees the mist rolls away, and men emerge into the effulgence of perfect day. In a word, poetry throws its light upon the path that should be trodden—but the extent of its illumination is limited, and when men have reached that bound, what more remains except to sing again what has been sung before—a task that no one thirsting for distinction would desire. But I tire you, Mr. Evelyn !”

“Tire me !” he exclaimed ; “you pay yourself a very poor compliment, and do me an injustice. From the isolation of my life, I have few opportunities such as I now enjoy in talking with you on a theme which I delight in ; and although I do not know if I can accept your views, still they are suggestive of much thought that will do me good service. Do you not think, Mrs. Aylmer, in thus foreshadowing the future of poetry, that your own mind is prejudiced by the utilitarian tendency of the age ?”

“The utilitarian tendency of the age,” replied Mrs. Aylmer, “is a cant term, which you will yet learn to despise. Those who use it think thereby to reflect on the pioneers of the army of truth. Iconoclasts though they be, the future will recognise in them the benefactors of the world. Let me, however, give you one example. There are two poems which stand pre-eminent—imagination cannot soar higher than in them ;

they afford us some of the finest passages of sublimity of all that we possess: I mean the Divine Comedy and the Paradise Lost. Yet if they were unwritten it would be impossible to write them now. You cannot conceive the idea of a man of Dante's intellectual power sitting down in the light of the nineteenth century to describe his material purgatory and everlasting hell, even by way of allegory; or a man of Milton's mental calibre presenting us with a picture of *Omnipotence fighting* with an *adversary* so powerful that the throne of heaven is almost in danger; not to speak of the impossible description of the Triune God, and the preposterous battle of the celestials with etherial cannon. And he would be a bold man who would dare to bring down an archangel to discourse on natural philosophy, when the next year would probably see some discovery announced that would upset the angelic revelation. Like the miracle plays, such poetry can never be again, any more than a Raphael could design the draught of fishes, with three or four fishermen standing in a boat not so large as one of their bodies."

"It has always been a dream of mine," said Eveleyn, "that, sooner or later, a poet would arise who should surpass all his predecessors. But if your theory be correct, that he is simply the rhythmic voice of the age he lives in, I think then that there is little hope that my notion will be realized. I said last night that I delighted in seeing men's clay idols demolished. You have taught me to feel in part what others experience when they see the hand of time sweep away some fondly cherished idea."

"Then you write poetry, I suppose," said Mrs. Aylmer, "and doubtless have had visions of a laurel crown. Will you take my advice?"

"What is it?"

"Abandon your labours in this field, if you want fame—lasting fame! Nothing less than a revelation from heaven would make me believe that any young man does well who devotes his time and energies to the composition of poetry."

"You also, Mrs. Aylmer, do you never court the muses?"

"I have," she replied, "written verses, stanzas for music, &c., during my idle hours; but I can truly say that I have never written anything that I could endure to read a year afterwards, though at the time of its composition my opinion may have been different. But who comes here?"

Two ladies were approaching.

"My sister and her governess," said Eveleyn.

"You must introduce me then?"

"With pleasure."

"What an exceedingly lovely girl," said Mrs. Aylmer as Lilla drew near.

"She is pretty," said Eveleyn, and added, *sotto voce*, "pray do not flatter her."

The formality of the introduction was soon over, and Eveleyn took his leave.

"Oh, papa," said Lilla, when she returned that afternoon, "Evvy introduced me to such a delightful lady. Miss Grierson and I took a long walk with her, and

she has promised to give me some lessons in singing and drawing, and I am to call on her the day after to-morrow."

"What's her name?" said Mr. Evelyn.

"Aylmer," replied Lilla.

"Do you know who she is?" asked Mr. Evelyn, turning to the governess.

"Yes, sir; she is the niece of Mrs. St. Ives, and wife of Colonel Aylmer, of the Company's Service. She has come to England for the benefit of her health."

"May I go, papa?" said Lilla imploringly.

"I will make one or two inquiries first," said the old gentleman, "and if they are satisfactory, as I have no doubt they will be, I should be glad for you to make her acquaintance."

The subject then dropped for the evening.

CHAPTER X.

ELECTIONEERING.

IN the succeeding month of February the free and independent burgesses of Bricklinton were startled from their usual semi-conscious state by the intelligence that their old member, Sir Fotheringay Helpmeete, had been removed, as his friends believed, and, as the clergyman said who preached the funeral sermon, to a seat in the Upper House, meaning thereby one of the mansions of the blessed.

Old Sir Fotheringay had sat for the borough for forty years, during which time he had by turns represented the different opinions of all his constituents. Now a Tory and anti-reformer, again a Whig and in favour of Catholic emancipation, he had veered all round the political compass frequently, and had voted in every direction, so that each Bricklinton burgess could boast that at some time or other his opinions had found expression in the House of Commons.



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Sir Fotheringay was what is called a Government man ; and if any ignorant person called his attention to the inconsistencies of his political career, he always had it in his power to assert that he was consistent in his adherence to the stronger party. Moreover, he used to say, " If the Government could not count upon me, of what service should I be to you ? What would become of my patronage ? Only fancy my sitting on the cold side of the opposition because my party were out ; I could not then assist one of my friends."

And to do the old gentleman justice, he had been the means of making more excisemen and government clerks than any other man in the House, besides getting stray commissions for the sons of the Clayshire gentry, whose influence in Bricklinton was extensive. The Bricklintonians never possessed in their member an orator, a party leader, or an earnest politician, but they nevertheless had in him a useful man, and now they did not know on what Elisha the mantle of Elijah would fall. They were not, however, kept long in suspense before the following placard appeared on the walls of the town :—

**" TO THE FREE AND INDEPENDENT ELECTORS
OF THE
BOROUGH OF BRICKLINTON.**

" GENTLEMEN,

" In consequence of the death of your late respected Representative, Sir Fotheringay Helpmeete, whose loss we all deplore, you will shortly be called upon to exercise your prerogative as Electors in the choice of his successor.

"I have the honour to offer myself as a Candidate for your suffrages, and shall take an early opportunity to explain my political views, which are based on sound constitutional principles, having for their object the integrity of all our institutions and the prosperity of the country.

"I am, Gentlemen,

"Your most obedient servant,

15th Feb. 18—.

"EDWARD LEVINGE."

The address fell like a bomb-shell, and the concussion caused the rust of half a century to crack and fall off from the electoral body.

"Levinge our member!" said one. "Levinge our member!" echoed another. "Levinge our member!" cried a third. "Never!" shouted the Town Council. "Never!" said the beer-house orators.

As we have before said, the Bricklintonians were, for the most part, well pleased with their late member; he was, in fact, a living compromise, the centre in which different opinions met, and the borough was thus saved from contention; for although the Tory party were not to be despised in point of numbers, it was an undoubted fact that the Liberals were in a considerable majority, and were every year growing in strength. It was, then, by no means flattering to their self-pride to find a Tory squire presuming to represent them in Parliament, and accordingly the mayor called the council together to deliberate in this unexpected emergency. Of course the council in their official capacity had nothing to do with the election; but as nine-tenths of them were well-known politicians of the Liberal school,

the expression of their opinion would have great weight. They met, then, as a body of friends to talk the matter over, and the result of their deliberations was, in the first place, that they would not have Levinge at any price; and secondly, that another candidate must be found. But who should he be?

Their first wish was to get some one of equal weight with Levinge, of equal standing in the county. In vain, however, the bewildered electors scanned their own squirearchy for a champion; all were Tories—uncompromising Tories—evidently there was no help. At length the mayor said, “Why not ask our townsman, Mr. Evelyn, to stand?” After some demurring on the part of a few, arising from a little jealousy, it was resolved that they should wait in a body on their old neighbour.

Mr. Evelyn received them very cordially, thanked them for the unexpected honour they had conferred on him, but declined their flattering proposal on account of his age. There was nothing left, then, but to get a barrister down from the Reform Club, and the next post carried a requisition, numerously signed, to Mr. Francis Leigh, of the Midland Circuit, asking him to contest the seat.

This gentleman had the advantage of a local connection, his father having been a general merchant in Bricklington, and having thrice filled the office of Mayor, so that he was preserved from the fatal stigma of an alien; and having the reputation of being clever in his profession, possessing also comfortable private pro-

perty, he had every right to aspire to the dignity of a Member of Parliament.

It was with a feeling of intense satisfaction that many of the townsmen read in the "Bricklinton Advertiser," four days after Mr. Levinge's placard had appeared, the following address:—

"TO THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORS
OF
BRICKLINTON.

"GENTLEMEN,

"I should, indeed, be insensible to the high compliment you have paid me, in requesting me, to come forward as a Candidate for the honour of representing you in Parliament, if I did not at once say I am ready and willing to serve you.

"My political opinions are known, I believe, to most of you. I have always been on the side of progress; and should your choice fall on me, it will be my pride, no less than my duty, to promote those measures which are most likely to ensure the continued prosperity of our country.

"I have the honour to subscribe myself

"Your obedient, humble servant,

"Reform Club, London,

"FRANCIS LEIGH.

Feb. 19, 18—."

Thus was the battle opened. Not the least pleased of the hundreds who scanned Mr. Leigh's address was Eveleyn. The more he read of the history of his country, the clearer evidence did he obtain of the dead weight she had always borne since Toryism had existed. But it must be honestly confessed that his experience of Toryism at home had had a more decided effect upon

his political convictions than all the acts of that party for the last century and a half. It was the synonym in Clayshire for intolerance, though individuals might be in themselves kind-hearted, as many were. Though as neighbours they might feel disposed to do their duty, as politicians they only represented the stick-in-the-mud principle, which may be thus defined :—

Firstly, the Church of England is the only true church ; and the poor must be educated in her communion, or not at all.

Secondly, the interests of all country gentlemen are primarily to be considered by statesmen.

Thirdly, tradesmen must be always treated as an inferior order—inferior in intelligence, in worth, in honour, and in morality.

Fourthly, the squirearchy have a vested right in the suffrages of all county and borough elections.

And fifthly, if any person will accept this creed (himself not a member of the privileged order), he may be considered to have a just appreciation of his position in life.

Rule, governance, power, they, the Tories, assumed to be theirs by prescription. Let any one gainsay it if he dare ! If these privileges were accorded them, all would go well. If resisted—woe to the rebellious people !

The Liberals of Bricklington had a wholesome horror of being politically swallowed by their opponents, and were determined, come what might, to fight the battle to the utmost. As soon as Mr. Leigh's reply had been

received, instant measures were taken to secure the promises of the electors. The town was divided into districts, over which a committee presided, which was in its turn subsidiary to the central association, so that a completely organised system was established, and the result of the first day's canvass was such as to inspire them with every confidence.

If some persons were pleased with Mr. Leigh's address, a great many more were very much disgusted.

"By ——!" said Mr. Howard, as he dashed the newspaper on the library table, "the impudence of these shopkeepers is astounding. D—— it! are these ribs to come down from that Reform—Reformatory it ought to be called—to oppose the country gentlemen in their own door-ways? And all at the beck of half-a-dozen blackguardly Town-Councillors. By ——! the world's turned upside down."

Levinge, too, had read the address with no very pleasant feelings. He had fancied he would only have to walk over the course; but now a contest, and probably an expensive one, stared him in the face. No wonder, then, that he anathematized the Liberals, and was anxious to know who was at the bottom of the movement.

Bricklinton, being an old borough, contained a large number of freemen, and as such many of the clergy and county gentlemen who resided in the vicinity possessed votes; thus the landed and commercial interests were placed in direct antagonism, and the episcopal and territorial aristocracy were banded against dis-

sent and the independent spirit of Liberalism ; so that all the prejudice and the bigotry of both sides were now about to be called into action.

Mr. Evelyn, from his age and natural dislike to turbulence and agitation, declined taking an active part in the election, and contented himself with offering his opinions, and promising the Liberals his vote.

Not so his son ; with all the vehemence of his ardent temperament he threw himself into the contest, attended every committee meeting, harangued the people, convinced the waverers, strengthened the convictions of supporters, and earned for himself the position of one of the principal leaders. Public meetings were held ; both candidates talked the usual amount of platitudes, and professed, or rather endeavoured to outvie each other in professions of disinterested regard for the welfare of the country ; which meant in the mind of either the necessity of advocating the interests of the party they respectively represented. Day after day passed away, and as the issue of the struggle drew nearer, the more strenuous became the exertions of the leaders on either side.

The head-quarters of the Liberals was at the Sheep's Head Hotel ; there the central committee met nightly, to discuss the conduct of the election, amid the incense of tobacco and the odours of grog. Into an inner room, where the priests sat in solemn conclave, presided over by the High Priest—in other words, the Mayor, Mr. John Jones—on a Wednesday evening, about a week before the election was to take place, the reader is re-

quested to enter, introduced by our mutual friend, Eveleyn. Mr. John Jones, his face rather red, and his eyes a little bloodshot, the result of a third glass of hot water with brandy, presides in an old-fashioned black mahogany arm-chair, in front of a table of the same colour, flanked by Mr. Finch the draper—Mr. Abbott the lawyer—Mr. Screw the Bank Co., and one or two others. With the exception of the lawyer, who drinks toast and water, each gentleman has his glass before him; and from the rings of wet, and little piles of pipe ashes, it is evident that the party are, at any rate, liberal to themselves in providing refreshment. Before Mr. Abbott lies a register, from which he has been reading.

"You are late to-night, Mr. Evelyn," said the Mayor, as he entered.

"Unavoidably so," said Eveleyn.

"Better late than never though," rejoined his worship; "we particularly wanted to see you. We find, on going over the list, that your father has no less than ten voters whom he can command, and five more whom he can influence."

"They are all safe," said Eveleyn.

"I fear not," said the Mayor.

"What do you mean?"

"We have reason to know that they are being tampered with."

"What proof have you?"

"That is not a question easily answered, but four of them can never be seen when anybody calls on them; and from the manner of as many others, I fear for their

fidelity. Don't you think your father could be induced to instruct them a little bit as to the path they should tread?"

"Certainly not," said Eveleyn. "All of these persons have already asked my father how they should vote, and the answer they received was, 'According to your convictions;' adding — 'what is the advantage of the franchise to you, if you do not know how to use it.?"

"It's very pretty in theory," said the Mayor.

"But it won't do in practice," said the Bank Co.

"Moonshine!" said Mr. Finch.

"A—a—very noble," said Mr. Abbott, "but not prudent."

"I hope, gentlemen," said Eveleyn, "that you will not imitate our opponents in using undue influence?"

"Oh, no!" said the hierarchy in chorus, in a tone that savoured of mockery.

"We have been going over the register to-night," said Abbott, "just before you came in, and we find that the run will be far closer than we at first imagined. We have a majority of thirty, and of that thirty not ten can be depended on, and the Blues pretend that they will beat us by fifty. But, from my experience of elections, I am confident that neither side will have ten men to spare, and it behoves us to secure every voter that we can lay our hands on. Now, out of the fifteen your father can influence, ten are pledged; but we can only depend on six—and pressure must be applied."

"Then," said Eveleyn, "I cannot be a party to it."

"But the Blues," said Abbott, "are putting on the screw in all directions, and bank-notes are flying about like snow-flakes."

"Only let us prove one instance of bribery on their part," said Eveleyn, "and all their efforts will be useless!"

"My dear Mr. Evelyn," continued Abbott, "you are young in electioneering tactics. Except in the large towns, when the constituency is too numerous to be corrupted, in every borough the victory is won by what is politely called 'management.' The thing is thoroughly understood; it is a mere matter of business."

"I hope not," said Eveleyn; "let us, at any rate, be an exception. I believe the voters feel the responsibility of their privilege; and from what I have seen, they are prepared to record their opinions at the poll like men."

"Look here!" said Abbott, pointing with his finger to a number of names on the register, against each of which was a black mark, "everyone of these men has his price, and will vote only as he is paid." Then taking out a pocket-book, he read, "'Thomas Fitch, butcher, wishes to sell a rick of hay, price fifty pounds. Edward Vowles, Chandler, can get a renewal of the lease of his shop for thirty pounds. John Fowke, glazier, wishes his father to be nominated for De Tourney's Charity. Anthony Fulke owes ten pounds to Mr. Ethelfield.' I have given you a specimen," continued Abbott, shutting up the book. "The average price of votes ranges from ten to twenty pounds, and the market is looking up."

"Horrible!" said Eveleyn.

Mr. Abbott smiled.

"We must meet our foes," said the Mayor, "with their own weapons."

"If that is the case, then," said Eveleyn, "seriously I must bid you all good-bye."

"Nonsense!" said the Mayor.

"That will look well," said the Bank Co., "won't it? People will say that you have been coerced."

"I care not," said Eveleyn, "what the people say, my mind is made up; I will fight to the last gasp on purist principles, but I will not even vote on any other."

This declaration rather puzzled his coadjutors. At last Abbott said, in his frankest manner, "I quite agree with our young friend. We will set the Blues an example of integrity. If we all agree to fight the battle on these grounds, I for one will not flinch."

"Nor I," said the others.

And Eveleyn, not being two and twenty, flattered himself that his constancy to principle had triumphed over the wavering minds of his fellow-committeemen; and, in company with the Mayor and one or two others, he proceeded into the large room adjoining, where some hundred or more of their party were assembled to enjoy the pleasure of exciting each other, and to learn what chances there were of doing a little private business. As soon as their backs were turned, the Bank Co. said to Abbott, "It won't do to let the young fellow come behind the scenes!"

"I quite agree with you," replied the latter, "and

as he is most useful, and our best speaker—we must humour him.”

“Exactly so,” said the Bank Co. ; “any little private transaction you and I can manage.”

The lawyer showed his long white teeth, and rejoined, “Too much discretion cannot be used.”

As soon as Eveleyn made his appearance among the Free and Independents, there was a shout of “Three cheers for the mayor !” Then followed, “Three cheers for Mr. Evelyn, our young orator.” “As you like him !” shouts a voice ; and again the cheering burst forth. After the tumult had subsided, the mayor attempted to address the meeting ; but as his voice was never calculated for public speaking, and his style, at the best times, unhappy, he did not succeed any the better for the brandy he had taken aboard.

“My frensh,” he began, “and brethrrren, do your dooty—” then a full stop, and “Hip, hip, hoorraa !” —“do your dooty, my frensh !”— (“Hear him !” screamed a wicked-looking cobbler, at the end of the room)—“Rightsh of the people, never shay die !”— (“We wont !” said the man of leather)—“Ha, ha, ha !” laughed the mayor, “thatsh right, my boy ! We’re here to day”— (“Night,” whispered Mr. Finch)—“night,” said the mayor, “to maintain our—our—our”— (“Children !” broke in the incorrigible cobbler, with a tone of sarcasm)—“our independence,” said the mayor, his voice getting a little clearer, “and we will not be trampled on by the aristocracy.” —“Britons never shall be slaves !” roared out the cob-

bler. "A Blue!" said one. "Turn him out!" said another. "A spy!" roared fifty. "Turn him out! turn him out!" was the cry, and the unhappy wretch was kicked into the street, Mr. Finch recommending that the offender's own leather should be tanned for him gratis.

After order was in some degree restored, there were loud cries for "Mr. Evelyn!" "Our young orator!" "Mr. Evelyn!" So our young friend had no alternative but to come forward.

"Electors and non-electors—I address you both, because those who have not the suffrage now will have it some day; and whether you have votes or not, you have an important stake in the country—I mean your liberties and your property. It matters not that you possess no large estates and splendid rent-rolls; you have, at least, your shops, your trades, or your labour; and you have as much right to insist that the legislature should consider your interests, as the interests of the landed or moneyed aristocracy. ('Hear, hear.') Hitherto, fellow-townsmen, the rich have made the laws for the poor, and the poor have had to suffer; hitherto, the prime necessities of life, in other words, everything that the working-classes possess, and nearly all that the middle-class own, have borne the burden of taxation. Your bread, your tea, your sugar, coffee, beer—all articles indispensable to your existence, except the last—all these are taxed, and from these the principal part of the revenue has been and is derived. **Yea**,—the money that should go to provide for the

comforts of your families is now expended for the benefit of the upper classes, and for the payment of the interest on the debt incurred in fighting for the cause of despotism in the Old and New World. (Cries of 'Shame !') You may well cry 'shame !' But where does the fault lie, but with you, who are not true to yourselves, because you send men to parliament who represent their own order, but think no more of you once they have left the sound of your cheers behind them ? Men of Bricklinton ! be true to yourselves now, now you have the opportunity of proving what you are made of ! I know that the tempter is abroad ; I know that Tory gold is being widely circulated, and Tory promises lavishly made. Touch not the vile thing ! Every man who takes a bribe is a wretch—a traitor—a Judas ! (Shouts of 'Go it, my hearty !' 'Down with the Blues !' 'Orange for ever !') Are there traitors among our ranks ? Impossible ! It is impossible that there can be such men, so base, so vile, so utterly unworthy of citizenship as to sell the cause of right, of freedom, and of justice for a bribe, a mean, paltry, worthless bribe, that is spent in a few days, and leaves nothing but the sting of self-reproach behind !

"Bribery ! I hate the word. The wretch who takes a bribe sells not only his vote, but his honour, honesty, integrity, and independence. Though he may take it secretly, though his name may never be made known, yet he must ever carry about with him the consciousness of his unutterable baseness."

"Hear ! hear ! hear !"

"Let us be true to ourselves, and the victory must be ours. We have a large majority; the principles of liberalism are acknowledged by three-fourths of the constituency. The tyranny of Toryism must be put down. We are not to be dictated to in our choice of a representative. We shall choose our man. We have chosen our man, and we will send him to Parliament. Three cheers for Mr. Leigh!"

In this strain Eveleyn continued for half-an-hour, denouncing corruption and extolling virtue—sentiments which called forth the loudest approbation from those who meant, if possible, to get bribes from both parties.

It is time that we should see what the Orange party are doing.

Changing the name of the inn, in other respects the scene is pretty much the same. The plot is identical. The *dramatis personæ* only are different. Opening the door of Mr. Levinge's committee-room, we find several friends of our acquaintance. First and loudest is Charley Davis, then Mr. Howard, Levinge, Ethelfield, three or four parsons, a shopkeeper or two—now on the most familiar terms with their patrons—three or four lawyers, and one Doctor, Ellwood.

Levinge is speaking.

"Something must be done, gentlemen, or we shall be the laughing-stock of the country. Imagine what will be said if we suffer ourselves to be beaten by a parcel of low-bred"—shopkeepers he was about to say, when he remembered the observation would be unpa-

latable to many of his supporters, so he changed the word to radicals. "I cannot picture such a disgrace as the gentry of Clayshire being defeated by a handful of demagogues, of whom that pestilent young fellow Evelyn is the head."

"I must confess," said Mr. Howard, "it's d——d cheeky of him."

"His wings must be clipped," said Levinge.

"But how?" said Charley Davis.

"If you meddle with him," said one of the shopkeepers, "you will only make him more bitter against us."

Levinge silenced the objector with a look, and continued: "If we can only succeed in putting a bit into that boy's mouth, the moral effect of it will be immense. His assurance breeds imitators; but once let him have his quietus, it will stop the crowing of other dunghills besides himself."

"I think Levinge is right," said the little squire. "Had they brought forward a man from the county, I would not have blamed 'em; but to send for a fellow from London, who doesn't own a stick in Clayshire, is an attempt to throw us overboard that I will never submit to. And all for what? Why, to support the commercial interests. D—n the commercial interests! Are the gentry of Great Britain to be sent to the wall to please the merchants and manufacturers?" The little man stamped on the floor with indignation, and continued: "No; we'll show 'em what we are made of. If these precious Radicals will be independent, inde-

pendent of us they shall be. Every man who votes for Leigh shall be marked ; and I for one—and I believe I can answer for my party—will never darken the shop doors of one of them, and then they shall taste of the fruits of their independence.”

Loud laughter from the Tory shopkeepers, who, as this speech was being delivered, had a delicious vision of a monopoly in their respective lines of trade.

“How stands the list?” said Davis *sotto voce* to Ethelfield. The latter replied, “Very unsatisfactory ;” then added in a whisper, “We really are in a minority.”

“The devil we are !” rejoined Charley.

“The worst of it is,” said Ethelfield, “the bank interest is all on the other side, and they can put the screw on famously. If we could ensure ten more votes than we now can reckon on, we should do. There are several of the Blues wavering, and I have the promises of three or four whom the Rads think they are sure of.”

“Can’t you find ten persons on whom we can put the screw ?”

“There’s the puzzle,” said Ethelfield. “We have a good many in our clutches now ; but it’s a terrible uphill game, and deucedly expensive.”

“Let me have a look at the list,” said Charley ; and he carefully went over the different names. At length he stopped. “Here’s a man,” he said, “who is to be had. Thrush the blacksmith.”

“I say, Henly,” said he, turning to our friend, who

was standing with his back to the fire, "come up with me now to Thrush's; people will not take so much notice of us as in the day time." So Charley and the reverend gentleman took their departure.

Proceeding up Main Street, they turned off about half way into a narrow lane, at the end of which stood the house and forge of Mr. Thrush, a reputed adherent of the Blue party, but who was known to be hanging back, to enjoy the sweets of persuasion.

Charley and Henly knocked at the door. Mrs. Thrush answered the summons, and in a voice whose gentle tones strangely contrasted with her amazonian proportions, she bade them enter.

"Come in, gentlemen," said she, opening the door of her small parlour, the walls of which were profusely decorated with portraits on glass of the twelve apostles, and Judas fronting the little pier-glass over the chimney-piece, looking as if he were betraying himself.

"Please take a seat, gentlemen," said the lady. But Charley, seeing that the room was without a fire, proposed to adjourn to the kitchen—a suggestion which the party at once acted upon, and the visitors made themselves comfortable by the side of the blazing logs.

"Where is your husband, Mrs. Thrush? We want to see him on business."

"I'm very sorry, sir," said the lady, "but Thrush has a violent cold, and is gone to bed. Anything about the horses as I could tell him?"

Mrs. Thrush had never read Machiavelli, but she understood the rudiments of diplomacy.

"No," said the parson; "we understood that we should find him at home; but we were not told of his illness. However, as it has so happened, probably we might call again."

Charley was impatient; so he blurted out, "It's no use humbugging you, Mrs. Thrush. We want your husband's vote."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Thrush, "it is very hard on poor people in these here 'lection times. So many gentlemen is axing him to vote, and promising him this an' that, a poor man doesn't know what to do. If he pleases one lot he offends another; and if he has nothing to say to none of 'em, the whole bilin' is as mad as snakes agin him. It would be a deal better if he had nothing to do with the 'lection."

"Just so," said Henly; "but what offers have been made?"

"Oh, nothing in partickler; but—but—"

"But what?" said Charley.

"I don't know as Thrush will vote at all," said the lady.

"What a fine ham that is hanging up," said the parson. "I wouldn't mind giving five pounds for it."

"I've refused ten," said Mrs. Thrush.

"Then," said Dick, "I'll give fifteen."

"Ready money?" suggested the owner.

"Yes," said Charley, "the morning after the election."

"Short payments," said Mrs. Thrush, "makes long friends; and Thrush owes ten pounds for iron."

"But," said Charley, "supposing we agreed to your

terms, perhaps Thrush will not choose to be bound by what you say."

"But I'll be bound he shall," said the smith's better half, with an air that carried conviction with it. "And indeed, gentlemen, the ham is too cheap. There's James Thomas, round the corner, sold his wheelbarrow for thirty pounds to Mr. Ethelfield, and I couldn't take less than twenty for the ham."

Charley and the parson sat silent awhile. Mrs. Thrush stood with her back against the dresser, twisting the corner of her apron, and putting on an air of meekness that did not correspond with her cast of countenance.

"Could we not see Thrush?" said Henly.

"'Tisn't worth while, your honour," said the lady; "what I ses, he does."

"The boot is on that leg, is it?" ejaculated Charley.

"Men is helpless creatures," mildly remarked Mrs. Thrush.

"I suppose," said the parson, "we must accept this woman's terms?"

"Needs must when the devil drives," said Charley.

"I always heerd as he managed 'lections," said Mrs. Thrush.

Both gentlemen laughed, and Henly counted down the stipulated sum, with an exhortation to fidelity.

"You may depend on my husband, your honour—he never played no man false."

The visitors were about taking their departure, when a loud scuffling was heard at the door, mingled with shouts, and language more expressive than polite. The

tumult evidently affected Mrs. Thrush in no small degree: she rapidly changed colour from red to yellow, and yellow to purple alternately. Henly observed her trepidation, and could not account for it, as the lady's reputation forbade the possibility of her being frightened by a drunken row. Before, however, either of the party in the kitchen had determined on any course of action, the front door was burst open, and the reputed invalid, Mr. Thrush, accompanied by half-a-dozen boon companions, rolled into the kitchen, to the no small chagrin of the canvassers, and the discomfiture of his wife, who, however, consoled herself that the coveted gold was safely stowed away in the bosom of her dress.

"Orange for ever! Down with the Blues!" roared the blacksmith, his face black with smut, his eyes rolling, and the foam standing in the corners of his mouth. So far from having been in bed, this worthy citizen had been enjoying himself at a public house; but as he seldom returned from the politico-convivial meetings, which occurred nightly in the town, until half-past eleven, or nearly twelve o'clock, his wife thought herself safe in saying that he had retired to rest, and little dreamed of her spouse appearing in so inopportune a manner.

With his leather apron rolled round his waist, his shirt sleeves tucked up, displaying a mass of muscle hard as whipcord, the master of the house presented an appearance more formidable than prepossessing.

"Who've you got here, Sal?" said the drunken host.

"Hold your tongue, Thrush," rejoined his spouse.

"Make your obedience to the gentlemen."

"Gentlemen!" said two or three of her lord's companions. "D——d Blues! We knows 'em."

"Orange for ever!" shouted Thrush.

"Please not to mind him, gentlemen," said the lady apologetically to her visitors; "he'll be all right in the morning."

"Who'll be all right in the morning?" cried Thrush.

"You," said his wife.

"You be d——d! Orange for ever!" screamed her lord.

"Take that for a cursed fool that you are," said the lady, planting a blow in her husband's chest that rolled him into the grate.

The smith jumped to his feet, and rushed like a wild beast at his gentle partner, who, noways daunted, stood on the defensive as calmly as a prize-fighter.

"Coward," said Henly, throwing himself between them; "don't strike a woman."

"Hands off," bellowed the smith's friends, closing round with ominous looks. Henly's foot slipped, and he fell; a second after, he was able to judge nearly of Mrs. Thrush's weight, as that injured creature was knocked down on him by her lord.

Charley rushed to the assistance of his friend; but as Thrush stood astride the prostrate bodies of his foes, and refused to move, he was under the painful necessity of trying an old cut of Tom Spring's; and striking fiercely at his opponent's brow with his knuckles turned downwards, he inflicted a wide gash, at the same time stunning him. All this scene passed in the twinkling

of an eye ; and with the usual fate of those who interfere between man and wife, no sooner was Mrs. Thrush able to get into action, than she flew at her late friends, amid the laughter and oaths of the bystanders.

Sauve qui peut was now the order of the day, and Charley and the parson rushed to the door ; but before the latter reached the street, the iron-bound shoe of Mrs. Thrush was applied to his person with such good will by that lady, that the reverend gentleman was shot into the street, like a bolt from a catapult ; while the whole neighbourhood seemed to ring with the cry of " Down with the Blues ! Down with the bl—dy Blues !" a charming alliteration, which the unregenerate minds of the Orange electors could not resist.

" Not a word of this in the committee-room, Davis ! D'ye hear ?"

" I should think not !" said that gentleman.

Next morning, however, the story was rife in the town, with several additions and variations.

When the canvassers rejoined their friends, they found them in high debate.

" I will tell you how it can be done," said Ethelfield, " if either of you have any weight with Salmon."

" I flatter myself," said Levinge, " I can influence that gentleman as much as anybody. What is your plan ?"

" Simply this," said the lawyer. " The lease of Evelyn's mill is nearly out, and if you could persuade Salmon to grant a renewal on fair terms, on condition that the Evelyns forego their opposition, or, at any rate, split their votes."

"I don't think," said Mr. Howard, "that Salmon could be persuaded to help you; and if he would, I cannot imagine that either old or young Evelyn would move a hair's breadth out of their way for any man."

"Then," said Levinge, "it will be some satisfaction to teach them that the gentry of Clayshire are not to be contemned with impunity."

After this, the meeting broke up.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CANVASSERS.

THE next morning it was arranged that Henly and Davis should pay Mr. Salmon a visit. So they drove to Oakland Hall.

"I wonder shall we find him at home?" said the parson.

"We can but take our chance," replied Charley. But they were not surprised, on their arrival, to hear that their friend was out.

"Is Mr. Salmon in?" said Davis.

"No, sir," replied the servant.

"Then we will wait." Accordingly the gentlemen made themselves at home in the dining-room; several hours elapsed, and still nobody came. Their patience being exhausted, they left.

In the afternoon, towards the evening, they called again, and driving into the stable yard, they saw a saddler at work in the coach-house.

Preceding our visitors a little while, we find Mr. Salmon sitting on a corn chest, gaily chatting with the

mender of harness. Suddenly his ear catches the sound of wheels, and, like a startled deer, he becomes on the *qui vive*. No sooner does the dog-cart roll into the gateway, than Salmon drops behind the chest, throwing himself flat on the ground.

"Joneth," said Salmon to the saddler, "if they athk for me, thay you havent theen me thince the morning."

"Let us ask this man," said Henly, "if he has seen Salmon lately."

"Very well," said Charley, who immediately bawled out, "I say, my hearty, where's your master?"

"Don't know, sir," said Jones, touching his hat; "havent seen him since breakfast;" and getting up from his seat, the man came forward, carefully locked the door, put the key into his pocket, and tendered his services to the visitors. Having put the horse into the stable, Jones thought it a nice opportunity to take what he called a spell, and get a glass of ale; leaving his master to enjoy his own reflections and useless maledictions.

Half past six o'clock arrived, and Levinge's committee were assembled, waiting for the return of the ambassadors. As the town clock struck seven, they arrived, and were only able to tell their friends that, although they had reason to believe Salmon was at home, they could not obtain an audience.

"What a d—d ass that fellow is!" said Mr. Howard. "If you go near his house, he runs to earth like an old rabbit."

"Very provoking," said Levinge, "the time is

drawing near." Then turning to Mr. Howard: "Will it not be advisable to make a fresh effort to see Salmon to-night? The chances are that he will not expect another visit, and we shall probably get an interview."

"I'm game!" said the squire; and ordering out a fly, the Candidate and his relative proceeded to Oakland Hall.

When they got within a few hundred yards of the house, Levinge proposed that they should walk the remainder of the distance.

"A good dodge," said the squire, which they at once put into practice.

As they approached they heard voices, and observed several lights moving to and fro in the granary and surrounding buildings.

"Here we shall find him," said the squire; and proceeding in the direction of the sound, they heard Salmon say—"There he goeth, Joneth!" Then a blow, and a shout, "D—n it, I've mithed him,"—followed by the squealing of a rat, and cries of "At im, Teazer, at him, good dog!"

"What an odd fellow he is," said Levinge—"catching rats by lamp-light."

Entering the granary they saw Jones holding a lantern, and Salmon standing on an inverted bushel measure, dragging a ferret out from beneath the end of a span-beam; while in the cattle-shed below, they heard the voices of three or four men engaged in assisting in the sport.

"Hallo, Salmon," said Mr. Howard, "what are

you doing ?” Escape was impossible, therefore throwing the ferret to Jones, Salmon came forward with his best grace, and welcomed his visitors.

“I must apologize to you,” said Levinge, “for intruding on you at this hour, but the time is getting so short, and so much remains to be done, that I thought I would not let another hour pass without seeing you.”

“Let uth adjourn to the houth,” said Salmon.

They were soon seated in the dining room, and the host, with his usual caution, allowed his friends to take the lead.

“Of course,” said Mr. Howard, “you know that we have come to see you on business connected with the election.”

“I’m thorry,” said Salmon, “that I have not a vote for Bricklinton.”

“It is indeed a matter of regret,” remarked Levinge, “that more of the gentry are not either freemen or freeholders therein; the inhabitants then would be preserved from the unprincipled attempts of demagogues and turbulent agitators.”

“I don’t thuppothe you care for ’em, though,” said Salmon.

“Not care for them?” replied Levinge; “I can only tell you that if every exertion is not made on our part we shall be beaten.”

“You mutht be joking,” said Salmon.

“No, by G—!” exclaimed the little squire; “Levinge is not exaggerating in the least degree.”

“Bad newth,” said Salmon, who, like most parve-

nus, was a violent supporter of the rights and dignity of the order to which he belonged. Not that he had any political convictions, farther than that he hated free trade, because he, in common with most of his class, believed it would seriously affect rents. Beyond this question he had no opinion, other than that he was a warm friend of the squirearchy, and would go through thick and thin to serve his party. He carried this feeling to an absurd length; but in upholding the landed interest he felt that he was doing battle for his own cause.

"Bad news, truly," said Levinge. "But I think it rests with you to turn the fortune of the day."

"How tho?" lisped Salmon.

"By putting a little pressure on the Evelyns."

Salmon laughed outright. "Why, I cannot thqueethe them," he said. "The rent ith alwayth paid to the day, and they have a leathe."

"That is the point we're coming to. Cannot you say to the Evelyns—I'll renew your lease on liberal terms, and give you a written promise to that effect, if you will forego your opposition to my friend."

"If you knew them," said Salmon, "you would ath thoon attempt to bribe the Archbithop of Canterbury ath either old or young Evelyn."

"Exactly my own opinion," said Levinge. "There is another course open to you, though. After you have tried fair means, and failed, you will be in a position to make it a personal question, and old Evelyn is far too keen a man of business to risk a good income for the sake of giving this Mr. Leigh a plumper."

"I'm not quite tho thure of that," replied Salmon ;
"but it ith no thmall boon you athk of me — to
quarrel with my betht tenant for nothing."

"But, Salmon," suggested Mr. Howard, "you
wouldn't like to see these d—d Radicals kicking the
county gentlemen out of Bricklington ! You would not
stand by, and see it done. And as sure as I'm now
speaking to you, they will succeed in doing so, if we do
not put forth our united strength !"

Levinge had a still more potent argument in reserve.
"You would like to have the right of game over Lord
Leaham's Bonnymore estate ?"

"Yeth," said Salmon.

"And you have wished to exchange the Bilberry
farm for my Lowfield meadows, you paying the dif-
ference ?"

"I have talked about it," said Salmon.

"Now," said Levinge, "I will insure you the game
on Bonnymore ; and I am willing to exchange the
farms, without a bonus, provided you will come down
on the Evelyns."

Certainly it was a very tempting offer, and there was
the additional pleasure of exhibiting authority, the
sweetest privilege, to vulgar minds, particularly when
it is exercised on a sensitive spirit—for brute power
delights in crushing out the divine spark of innate
nobility in those whom the laws of conventionalism
deem inferiors, and whom the ignorant call upstarts.

"But why are you tho down on the Evelynth ?" said
Salmon.

"Because," replied Levinge, "the influence they possess in Bricklinton, if unchecked, will, in all probability, secure this fellow Leigh's return. The young man is working night and day, canvassing incessantly, haranguing the mob, exciting the people, and stimulating his party to incessant efforts. I can speak confidentially to you; and the fact is we are in a minority of ten! What changes may take place between this and the election no one can foresee; but if we are to be victorious, no ordinary exertion must be used. However, come in with us in the fly to our committee-room, and you shall hear what others say."

"I can't come in thith dreth," remonstrated Salmon.

"Nonsense!" replied his friends in a breath; and before the master of Oakland Hall very well knew where he was, the lamps of Bricklinton flashed through the windows of the vehicle.

When they entered the committee-room, they found the assembled party in high glee. A little time before, one of the Tory shopkeepers had come in, big with the story of Davis's and the parson's adventure. So Salmon was entertained with the narrative, which highly amused him, and, at the same time, afforded him an instance of the insolence of the Rads, showing the necessity that existed to put them down.

Levinge had persuaded his friend to come into town to judge for himself; and, as every member of the committee had a dozen tales of the assurance or tyranny of the Orange party (which were now poured into his willing ear), the time that Salmon spent in the room

afforded sufficient evidence to prove satisfactorily to his mind that Clayshire was on the brink of a revolution, which, if successful, would for ever destroy the prestige of the county gentlemen—a catastrophe, in his opinion, more to be dreaded than the overthrow of Christianity; and so excited did he become, that he positively made up his mind to call on Mr. Evelyn next morning.

CHAPTER XII.

LANDLORD AND TENANT.

MR. EVELYN sat in his counting-house, busily engaged with his correspondence, when the door opened, and a stout gentleman entered.

"Mr. Evelyn, I believe?" said the visitor.

"That is my name, sir," replied the old gentleman. "You have the advantage of me."

Salmon—it was he—introduced himself.

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed Mr. Evelyn—"but so many years have passed since I saw you, a young man, just returned from college—and you are so changed, of course, since then, that I should not have known you. Pray be seated."

After a little preliminary conversation, Salmon commenced: "I thuppoth you take an active part in thith election, Mr. Evelyn?"

"I really do not," replied that gentleman; "I am too old for exciting scenes, such as are daily witnessed in this town."

"If that ith the cathe," said Salmon, "perhaph you would, to oblige me, abthtain from voting?"

"It grieves me to refuse you," was the answer, "but I am pledged."

"Can't you and your thon thplit your voth, then?"

"Mr. Salmon, I do not understand you."

"Ah," thought Salmon, "he'th a cunning old bird! He won't name hith price, and wantth me to make him an offer."

"If you will oblige me in thith matter, I will do you a thervice," said Salmon—"I'll renew the leathe of your mill, for the thum you offered, if you and your thon will thplit, or abthtain from voting."

The blood mounted into the old gentleman's face, and it was with no small difficulty that he suppressed his rising choler. He waited some little time before he answered. "I am surprised, sir, that you should have made such a proposition to me."

"No offenthe, I hope," said Salmon; "but I think it right to tell you that, if you refuthe to oblige me, I thall not forget it. Come, Mithter Evelyn, you are a good man of buthineth—What advantage will it be to you if Leigh ith returned? It won't put five poundth into your pocket; and if you will agree with me, you will do a good morning'th work."

Before the old gentleman had time to reply, Eveleyn walked in, and stared with surprise at seeing his landlord in the office. "What can he want?" thought he to himself.

"How do ye do!" said Salmon, extending his hand.

The salutation being over, Mr. Evelyn began : " Mr. Salmon," said he, " has done me the honour to offer to renew our lease of the mill, on the terms we proposed, with one condition."

" What is that ?" said the son.

" Only," replied the father, " that we shall abstain from voting."

" Abstain from voting ? I do not understand you."

" Yeth," said Salmon, rising, " I called on your father to-day to thay that, if he will oblige me, I'll do you a good turn rethpecting the leathe."

" Do you mean to say," said Eveleyn, " that you wish to bribe us ?"

" Thatth an ugly word," replied the visitor. " But if you are free men, are you not at liberty to conthult your own interetht ? And what advantage can you derive from Leigh'th return tho great athwhat I offer you?"

" Mr. Salmon," said Evelyn, junior, " gold is not the measure of everything—and principle cannot be bought or sold."

" You're a young man," replied Salmon ; " I've told your father that I conthider thith a perthonal quethtion ; tho it will be better for you to let me have my way."

" Do you dare to threaten us, sir?"

" There'th nothing like plain thpeakin," was the answer.

" I think, sir," said Mr. Evelyn, " we may consider this interview at an end."

Salmon turned on his heel and walked out, vowing vengeance to himself.

"What do you think of Tory intolerance now, father?" said Eveleyn.

"I could not have believed that any person calling himself a gentleman could have descended to do such dirty work at the bidding of a party; for Salmon can have no personal interest in securing Levinge's return."

"It's all of a piece," replied the son. "As long as you let the Tories play the part of lords bountiful, and defer to them as to a superior order of beings, they are the pleasantest people in the world. None more jovial, none better-tempered or kinder-hearted. But once let the commercial interest bestir itself, once let Liberalism raise its head, and all the old feudal pride is revived, and the burghers must be put down."

"Fortunately for the interests of mankind," said Mr. Evelyn, "their power is passing away, and they are gradually subsiding into the very useful, but by no means dignified, position of drag to the state coach; and if they are content to be pulled through the mud, well and good; though I can neither understand the nature of their perceptive faculties, nor envy their mental constitution."

The father returned to his letters; the son walked out to the farm. When they met again at dinner, Mr. Evelyn said,—“I forgot to tell you that Mrs. Aylmer called this morning, and has carried off Lilla to spend the day with her. I promised to send you to bring her home this evening.”

CHAPTER XIII.

EVELEYN BRINGS HIS SISTER HOME.

SINCE we last saw Mrs. Aylmer, her acquaintance with Lilla had ripened into a strong friendship. The world remarked that Lilla had a brother; but the world is ever censorious. It was nevertheless true that the lady was frequently a guest at Mr. Evelyn's, and our young friend always managed to be at home on those occasions; and Lilla as often, or rather oftener, partook of the hospitality of Mrs. Aylmer. In some respects it was a great advantage to the young girl.

Her new acquaintance had mixed a great deal in the world, was well educated, and naturally clever; so that, in an æsthetical point of view, she was likely to reap no small good from the intimacy. Whether in higher matters Mrs. Aylmer was a suitable person to assist in forming her mind, is a question which the issue will determine.

A little after eight o'clock in the evening, so as to enjoy two or three hours of her society, Eveleyn entered

Mrs. Aylmer's drawing-room. That lady was seated near the fire, and Lilla was playing a waltz. As he entered, the beautiful hostess extended her soft, white hand, saying with a smile,—“Welcome, Sir Champion of the people!”

“Thanks,” said Eveleyn; “but I am not a Chartist!”

“I would not do your intelligence such injustice as to suppose you could be one,” was the reply. “How goes on the election?”

“If,” said Eveleyn, “we may judge of the expectations of the Tories from the desperate efforts they have resorted to, I imagine their success is hopeless.”

“Delightful!” said Lilla.

“Ah!” said Mrs. Aylmer with a sigh, “the enthusiasm of youth! How it carries us forward! I, too, was an enthusiast once, Lilla.”

“And are you not one now, dear Mrs. Aylmer?” exclaimed the young girl.

“Too much so,” was the answer; “but not a political enthusiast. Woman that I am, I have looked at obverse and reverse, and have always found politicians to be poor things.”

“I suppose you are speaking of the Tories now,” said Eveleyn smiling.

“No, I am not. You are all alike, ambitious and selfish, deluding and deluded; victims and cheats by turns. One party relies on its prestige and great possessions; the other makes capital of popularity, and thus gains power. The Tories, for shame's sake, affect liberality. The Liberals dare not carry out their tenets,

because, if they did, the ground on which they stand would be cut from beneath them."

"According to your views, Mrs. Aylmer," said Eveleyn, "it matters not what side you take, the end must be alike the same."

"Do not mistake me," she rejoined; "I am speaking of practice, not theory. Abstractedly, the Liberals are right. I only quarrel with them because their deeds fall so far short of their professions."

"In common fairness, Mrs. Aylmer, you should state the reason," said Eveleyn. "Liberalism must consent to compromises. Of what use would it be to hold opinions that can never be applied; or, rather, which men in the onset will not apply to government? Let the doctrines remain as lights to guide our feet, and be it the aim of those who hold them to extend their application, content at first with the insertion of the edge of the wedge, and posterity will live to see it driven home. Oh, it is a glorious creed, this Liberal faith! To look behind the veil, to watch this great power breaking down the narrow bonds that nations in their ignorant childhood have bound around themselves, teaching men true notions of what they owe to each other, binding the world together by ties of mutual dependence, demolishing the isolating tendencies of the ancient patriotism that meant my country above the world, and substituting the nobler truth that we are all inhabitants of one great country, members of one family, children of one Father; demonstrating that the divisions of nations by seas, rivers, or mountains are purely arbitrary;

that the interests of one are the interests of all; that the particular want is the common gain. This is the great work Liberalism is accomplishing; and as it is by degrees sweeping away class jealousies in our own land, declaring to the people that they must go on hand in hand, so, in the world at large, is it preparing the mind to receive the great idea of the universal brotherhood of mankind. Liberalism, properly understood, is a material gospel, and its orators are Evangelists; though I devoutly believe that many are ignorant of the divine significance of the words they utter!"

"Again I cry," said Mrs. Aylmer, "delicious enthusiasm of youth! If you were to write down what you are now saying, and read it forty years hence, how you would laugh! Think you that these manufacturers, merchants, bankers, shopkeepers, are one iota more generous than the most uncompromising squire of Clayshire? Does philanthropy stir them? Does philosophy cause them to move? On the contrary, you know perfectly well selfishness is the agent, the sole cause of action. The theory they adopt is plausible; but were it ten times more apparent than it is, would they put their convictions into practice against their interests?"

"I do not imagine they would," said Eveleyn, "nor can I understand why this abnegation of self in commerce is more obligatory than in morals. Is not our selfishness appealed to in every pulpit discourse? We are not told that it is our duty to love virtue because it is beautiful, but because certain pains and penalties

are attached to immorality ; and if the man from love of self accepts the doctrine practically, however little merit may be due to him individually, yet the philosopher or the religionist cannot avoid paying his tribute of admiration to the intrinsic beauty of virtue, or refuse to acknowledge what a blessing it would be if its practice were universal. I am perfectly aware of, and deeply lament, the insincerity and hypocrisy common among politicians of my way of thinking. I know that many adopt Liberalism because it is an easier road to power, because men prefer to trust to large promises, and accept small performances, rather than listen to the voice of truth speaking plainly. For my part, I hope that I have adopted liberal opinions from conscientious conviction ; and I do battle for the professors of Liberalism, not because I believe they can accomplish all they promise, but in the hope that we shall receive an instalment of the advantages which those who come after us will undoubtedly enjoy."

" You are always ready with some plausible answer," said Mrs. Aylmer ; but she added, smiling, " there is more of sophistry than reason in your answer. It is only the old Jesuitism, ' the end justifies the means,' and therefore you sacrifice candour and honesty to the shadow of some dim Utopia."

" Not at all, Mrs. Aylmer," replied Eveleyn. " I perceive that you are purposely perverse, and am convinced you really do not hold the opinions you have put forward. Otherwise I must accept the conclusion that you have no faith in men."

"Had you said little faith," replied Mrs. Aylmer, "you would have been perfectly right. I have scarcely ever known a good man, and I believe the genus is rare, if not extinct; and as for public men, in them the idea of patriotism is altogether passed away, except in name. Place, power, and preferment are their triune creed; for these they sacrifice father and mother, sister and brother, and a man's foes become those of his own household, if he stand in their way or they in his. Peep behind the scenes, it matters not what party is in office, and then you see a locust swarm of relatives, friends, and supporters jostling each other in their eager haste to make sure of their reward. Members clamorous for place, Barons hunting for Earldoms, Earls craving to be made Marquises, Marquises panting for Dukedoms, and one and all struggling for power, with just enough regard for decency in their proceedings as serves to conceal their manœuvres from the common eye."

"What unadulterated cynicism!" exclaimed Eveleyn.

Mrs. Aylmer burst out laughing. "There," said she, "I am better now. I have expended all my spleen. Come, Lilla, let us sing that duet—your brother has not heard it."

The ladies seated themselves at the piano. Eveleyn proposed to turn over the leaves; and by carefully reading the words, he managed to execute his part of the performance satisfactorily.

"Bravo!" said he, as the song concluded, adding, "your pupil is improving, Mrs. Aylmer."

Lilla blushed, because Eveleyn never dealt in compliments, and when he praised she knew he meant it.

"Yes," said Mrs. Aylmer, "but she should practise more." Another song or two followed, but it was evident that music was not what Eveleyn cared for that evening. The election was uppermost in his mind, and of it only could he talk.

"Yes," replied he, in answer to a question, "I firmly believe we shall return Mr. Leigh; and if we succeed, we shall be able to boast that neither bribery nor corruption has been used on our part."

"Are you sure of it?" said Mrs. Aylmer.

"I am as positive as I can be of anything," was the answer.

"So much the better!" said Mrs. Aylmer; "and now that I have soundly rated politicians of all schools, I frankly say I hope you will win."

"If I did not know to the contrary," said Eveleyn, "I should infer that this contest is assuming the aspect of a personal question with you."

"How do you know that it does not?"

"Because you are not interested in any of the persons engaged in it."

Mrs. Aylmer said nothing, but gave Eveleyn a look that thrilled his soul.

It was so unexpected, he had not sufficient resolution to return it, so he dropped his eyes; but when he raised them again, he encountered the same glance. It fascinated him. Where was the memory of Kate Howard then?

"Mrs. Aylmer?" said Lilla.

The lady started. "My dear!"

"Who is that old gentleman—that soldier, I mean—hanging over the chimney-piece?"

"My husband!" She shuddered, and turned deadly pale, averting her face from Eveleyn.

"Your husband!" exclaimed Lilla; "I thought he was—" and perceiving she had made a *faux coup*, she hesitated.

Mrs. Aylmer finished the sentence.

"My father. He was my guardian—he married me at sixteen." She audibly sighed.

It was an unfortunate hit of Lilla's, and some time elapsed before either of the party thoroughly recovered self-possession. On any other occasion the mention of Colonel Aylmer's name would not have affected his wife; but Lilla's voice seemed to her like that of a warning angel—or rather as if her tutelary genius had inspired the question, thereby reminding her of her vow—at a time when far other thoughts possessed her mind. But Mrs. Aylmer shook off the unpleasant memory, and Eveleyn mentally pronounced the absent soldier a bore.

"It is time we should go, Lilla," said her brother.

"Oh, do not hurry," said the hostess. "Let us draw near the fire—the night air is cold. I have lately been thinking over our morning's conversation the day after the ball; and, if you remember, I advanced certain opinions respecting poetry."

"I perfectly recollect," said Eveleyn.

"And I failed to convince you, as usual, and wearied you, as is common."

"Of course," said Eveleyn, smiling ironically, "you always do."

"Then," replied the lady, "I have given the infiction a more permanent form, by committing my notions to paper, which I intend you shall read, and which I hope you will do me the favour to reply to."

"When am I to be favoured with the manuscript?"

"To-night! Will you hand me that portfolio?"

Eveleyn obeyed.

The lady opened it and took out a large envelope. "There," said she; "criticize; spare not, and confute——"

Eveleyn bowed and put the paper into his pocket.

"We really must go now," said Lilla rising.

"Stay," said Mrs. Aylmer, "the servant shall bring your wraps downstairs for you."

"Oh no, thank you!"

Eveleyn had risen, and was standing on the hearth-rug. Mrs. Aylmer approached.

"Will you do me a favour?"

"With all my heart."

"Then wear this at the election." And she handed him a beautifully made orange rosette.

"Many thanks!" said Eveleyn, his face flushing. Mrs. Aylmer stood in front of him, her arms extended their full length downwards, the hands clasped—her head thrown a little back—not a particle of colour in her cheeks—her large soft eyes gazing into his as if she

would read his thoughts. Not a word was spoken on either side. "How lovely she is!" thought Eveleyn. "My beau-ideal of a man," said Mrs. Aylmer to herself.

Lilla's hand was on the handle of the door.

"Good night!" said Eveleyn.

The lady did not speak, but Eveleyn fancied he felt the warm pressure of that soft round hand until he fell asleep that night.

"Have you heard," said Lilla, as she walked up Main Street with her brother, "that Jack Hilton has returned?"

"Yes," was the reply, "he is now a full-fledged attorney."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NOMINATION.

A BRIGHT, fresh morning ushered in the day of the nomination of candidates for the honour of representing the Borough of Bricklington in the Imperial Parliament ; a day ever memorable in the annals of the town, when the patricians and plebeians confronted each other for the first time in hostile array ; when the relative strength of the Clayshire aristocracy and Bricklington democracy was first tested ; when the people for the first time stood upon their rights, and dared to bring forward a candidate of their own.

O day of Jeremiads ! How have the old foggrums wept over thee ! How have they mourned thy dawning !—seeing in thee the forerunner of changes tending downwards—downwards even unto the political Tophet of sans-culottism.

There was a time when the last lord of that castle whose battlements frown down upon you, looked from his towers at the houses of the burghers beneath,

mourning over the dying day of feudalism, and prophesying the future woe and misery of the land. There was a time when the partisans of the Stuarts held that keep, and heard in the voice of puritanism the knell of Britain's glory. And yet the town grew, and the county flourished, and the prophets of evil were proved to be possessed by lying spirits. Cassandra's vocation is gone; one by one have the old bulwarks been removed, and, like the harness that the knights erst wore, the defences in which the old people trusted have been shown to be encumbrances. Old Sarum has passed away. The Catholics and Jews are in Parliament; bounties and Protection have departed. One by one the predicted curses have proved blessings. When shall our faith in the future cease? The foggrums have no future, they exist in a dead past, and yet exhibit a tenacity of life second only to that of those monads who live upon themselves, grow fat and multiply on the consumption of their own bodies.

Oh, ye Bricklintonians, adorned with orange ribbons, how the Church mourned over your judicial blindness, and out of pure compassion longed to compel you to reason! Oh, ye Bricklintonians, given over to a reprobate political mind, how did the gentry of Clayshire grow pale at the dread prospect opened before their eyes in your rebellion! "Rebellion! foul dishonouring word! Rebellion against the principles of those who believe in the right divine of kings—in the wisdom of hereditary legislators—in the absolute necessity of a State Church—in the right to dictate to any trader—in

the superiority of the county and in the lowness of the commercial mind. Unhappy people, on whose devoted heads the wrath vials were about to be opened, because, having tasted of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, ye dared to think—and thinking, dared to act! Profane and abandoned Bricklintonians—there is no hope for you—the seal is set—your doom is fixed!

As we have before said, the day dawned gloriously. Scarcely a cloud floated across the sky; the wind was from the south, and soft as summer. There were few late sleepers that morning in the little town. Everybody seemed to be awake and stirring long before breakfast. Banners hung suspended from the windows, and flags stretched on lines across the street formed arches. Huge orange and blue placards were stuck about the streets, politely instructing the public who should be voted for, as if every vote were not already appropriated. Then there were bands of music, playing all sorts of airs out of tune, by way of practice, as if they expected to attain proficiency by the inductive method, proceeding from discord up to harmony. Old vehicles, supposed to have been originally the chariots of Boadicea's host, a little modernised by successive repairs, were brought out with the intention of getting them into action for the use of the electors next day. Tallymen moved about singly or in parties, a little noisy and rather blasphemous; while every man wore a blue or yellow rosette, and even the servant girls donned the respective colours of their masters.

No small amount of epigrammatic wit had been

expended in lampooning either party, and effusions such as the following were as plentiful as blackthorn blossoms in May :—

“ Ye hapless men of Bricklinton,
Whose bark no pilot steers,
But helplessly is drifting on,
And still the danger nears ;
Soon will your wretched doom be o’er,
Wrecked on a wild and waste lee (Leigh) shore !”

Another, on the Blue candidate, ran thus :—

“ Old Nick was out taking a ride t’other day,
Making calls on some sons of the church,
Who from nervousness lately had feared to obey
His good lessons, and had even bethought them to pray,
Till he told them, ‘ My children, happen what may,
I will never leave you in the lurch.’

Then one—’twas a Rector—‘ My lord,’ said the Priest,
‘ Old Sir Fotheringay Helpmeete is gone to his rest,
And Bricklinton must have a member instead.’

‘ What makes you so sure that your old friend is blest ?’
Said Satan. ‘ Then from that I suppose he’s your guest,’
Cried the Priest. ‘ But it matters not, so he is dead.’

‘ Well, who is your man,’ Beelzebub cried,
‘ Who can fill the position with grace ?’

‘ If your lordship will say what you want, we’ll decide
Who he shall be.’ Satan quickly replied,

‘ Your request, my dear son, cannot be denied ;
I at once will describe the right man for the place :—

‘ He must fawn on the rich ; the poor he must grind ;
By turns he must tyrannize, flatter, and cringe ;
Speak smooth to his foes ; round his friends he must wind ;
Learn the secrets of others, ne’er tell his own mind ;—
This, then, is the sort of young man you must find.’

‘ Oh, thanks !’ said the Priest ; ‘ we’ve all this in Le-
vinge !’ ”

The remaining verses we must sacrifice at the shrine of decorum.

It was arranged that the nomination should take place in the Town Hall ; and there, long before the appointed time, the people began to assemble. The interior formed a parallelogram. A high bench stretched across the upper end, and extended about thirty feet down each side, while over-head were two capacious galleries, facing each other, and appropriated to the service of the ladies. Down the centre of the hall a strong railing was erected, so as to divide the parties ; for men are seldom more disposed to fight than when they assemble to settle any disputed point under the banner of reason and *calm* judgment. It was also a fortunate occurrence for the convenience of all parties, and the preservation of order, that there were two entrances to the hall ; one of which led to the raised bench and galleries, and the other to the area below them.

A little after eleven o'clock the Blue party left their committee-room. They numbered among their ranks nearly all the gentry of the county. Those who had votes came to support their candidate ; those who had not came to add weight to the demonstration. Levinge leaned on the arm of Mr. Davis of Waterpark, a gentleman whom we have not hitherto seen ; but election time is a season especially devoted to the unrolling of mummies, who are brought out into daylight for the occasion, and afterwards carefully put by in the family museum. Charley Davis's father was one of these, and, in compliment to his temporary resurrection, the post

of honour was assigned to him, that of proposing Levinge as a fit and proper person, &c., &c. Then came Mr. Howard and Mr. Ethelfield; then a detachment of the army of martyrs, alias clergymen, to whom the scent of an election contest is as pleasant as the scent of a battle field to the ravens; and after them a host of others—shopkeepers arm-in-arm with squires, professional men fraternizing with publicans—a sort of happy family. A band preceded them, while a crowd of tally-men, and a sea of people, encompassed them about.

In this disorder they reached the hall. The Orange party had taken their places. The Mayor was standing in front of the chair, on his left Mr. Leigh and his friends; the remainder of the bench was devoted to the Tory candidate and his supporters. Then followed deafening cheers and counter cheers—hats, caps, and handkerchiefs were frantically waved on either side; men opened their mouths so wide that the more timid shrank back, thinking of Jonah and his visceral retreat. One gallery was filled with ladies; and such was their patriotism, that even those with dark complexions wore blue ribbons, though some of the old girls secretly wished that orange meant Toryism, it being so much more becoming.

Eveleyn stood beside Mr. Leigh, engaged in desultory conversation; now looking at the crowd before him, his heart throbbing with excitement, and now ranging along either gallery.

"It is! No, it is not! Yes! it is Kate Howard!" Eveleyn became deadly pale, and looked in another

direction. What was she to him? Nothing. Wherefore did he again turn his eyes in the direction where she sat in the foremost row, talking to Mrs. Davis?

"She looks this way," said he to himself. "I wonder does she distinguish me?" But he could not flatter himself that she recognised him. "How lovely she is," thought Eveleyn; "the queen of all around her! How lovely, and yet how thoughtful—anxious even. But not a look for me. Poor fool! Why should I expect one?"

There was a sensation in the back part of the gallery. A lady was pressing in, much to the discomfort of those of her own sex who had seated themselves in her vicinity. The lady was splendidly dressed, but, unlike all around her, she wore no party colour. At length she turns her face to the front. It is Mrs. Aylmer.

Eveleyn watched her earnestly. Presently he saw her lift her handkerchief significantly. Was it a signal of recognition? Eveleyn bowed slightly; he could distinctly see her smile in reply, and Mrs. Davis, whose curiosity surpassed her breeding, looked round and whispered to Kate. Had Eveleyn been near her, he would have heard the word "Scandalous." As it was, he perceived Kate was made acquainted with all that passed, and for the moment he wished Mrs. Aylmer elsewhere.

The clock has struck twelve. Amid a dead silence the writ was read by the Mayor in his usual clear voice and distinct enunciation; so that, for all the people

heard, the parchment might have been a bill of indictment for high treason.

The preliminary formalities having been gone through, Mr. Davis of Waterpark hemmed three times, and spoke as follows. His voice being low, and feeling very nervous, all that reached the reporters was—

“ I have—hon—pose Mr. Edward Levinge as—fit—prop—person to—present the Bor—of Bricklington in Parlia—;” and gaining a little confidence, he continued,—“ Electors, I have known my friend Mr. Levinge from his boyhood, and I am proud to call—to call him my friend. We shall—that is, I mean—we shall—return him.” Here Mr. Davis came to a full stop; and after making terrific faces, he fell to the rear, amid the deafening cheers of the excited Blues, and hisses of the Orangemen.

“ How well he speaks,” said Mrs. Aylmer in an audible tone, loud enough for Mrs. Davis to hear.

One of the Tory shopkeepers came forward, and made a spasmodic effort to second Levinge’s nomination, and succeeded admirably in dumb show, which was accounted sufficient.

The Mayor called on the electors to name another candidate; which the Bank Co. replied to by proposing, in a few brief words, Mr. Leigh. Then Eveleyn, in seconding the nomination, addressed the meeting. Turning his eyes with pardonable vanity to the front row in the Blue gallery, higher up the handkerchief again fluttered, but that was the only sign he received. Inwardly sighing, and yet half resentful, he commenced :

“Your Worship, and brother Electors of Bricklinton, —A post has been assigned to me to-day, which I am proud to fill, though I regret it has not been entrusted to one more worthy than myself. If zeal, though, were a test of fitness, I would yield to none; for I esteem this day to be the noblest of my life, and it is not too much to say that it is also the day which hereafter, in point of honour, shall take precedence over every other memorable in the annals of the town, as the occasion when the Electors first struck off the shackles of bondage.” Vehement cheering among the Orange party—a tumult of tongues among the Blues. The Mayor vainly attempted to keep silence; comparative quiet being at length restored, Eveleyn resumed—

“I am here to speak the truth, and care not whether it is palatable or nauseous (Great cheering). I repeat, to-day we are standing up as freemen; and, despite frowns, intimidations, and corruption, I am certain that we shall find this, our first great struggle for liberty, a great success, a glorious triumph. Too long have we shown our subserviency, too long have we endured the insulting patronage of Toryism (Terrific uproar). Too long have we been at the beck and nod of men whose interests, if not really hostile to ours, are nevertheless paraded in a spirit of antagonism; either because their leaders are sublime in their ignorance, or else because they are actuated by factious motives (Cheers and counter cheers).

“Electors! we will ring the knell of this state of things to-day. It shall go forth to the world—it shall

be told in every street—that one borough, described popularly as rotten, has dared to return a member in the teeth of a party who never have learned, and, in virtue of their creed, never can learn, to march forward with the progress of events (Tumult in the body of the hall).

“It shall be said that one borough laughed to scorn the petty tyranny of a clique who believed themselves to be omnipotent.

“I don’t wish to be personal; but with the instances of corruption of which we have the clearest evidence—(The rest of the sentence was lost in the uproar).

“I appeal to you as men to hear me. I address you as intelligent beings, therefore hear me. In common fairness hear, and controvert my assertions if you can.” He might just as well have spoken to the winds.

With a smile of something between scorn and pity curling his lip, he stood patiently. After a time the strongest lungs weary, so at last there came a lull—then loud, clear, and mellow rose his voice—not a word was lost; and as he had passed from personal to general topics, the people were more patient.

“We are here in the exercise of a great trust to-day, and it is no answer to assert that it is a matter of indifference to the country at large whether a Tory or a Liberal is chosen to represent us; for that argument, if applied everywhere, must either mean that the electors are indifferent as to the government they live under, or else are venal and corrupt—or, what is more insulting

still, so frightfully ignorant that they know not how to choose. And to you who are emphatically called the people, I especially address myself, for with you mainly lies the future of this great nation ; because you are the source of its wealth, and every year your power is increasing. Be not deluded—be faithful to yourselves. Let not effete traditions pervert your judgments, nor suffer specious promises to induce you to betray your trust. We offer you substantial advantages ; our opponents flatter you to your political destruction. We tell you that you are unjustly dealt with. Our opponents cry ‘ Church and State ! ’ and say happiness is only to be found in their ranks. We say, arise and be free. They offer you a mess of pottage. We say, stand forth as men. They tell you to rest quiet as children. Choose, then, between justice or one-sided legislation—between self-respect or groveling subserviency—between freedom or slavery. Electors of Bricklinton, shout with me—‘ God and Liberty ! ’ ” He waved his hat. The Orangemen took up the cheer, till the roof rang with the shouting.

However clever Levinge was, public speaking was not his forte, and his attempt to reply to Eveleyn was a failure. Leigh followed. His tall figure, intelligent face, and gentlemanly address would in any other arena than that of an election meeting have ensured him a respectful hearing. But it was too evident to the Blues that their side had proved themselves inferior in oratorical power, and they resolved to drown the voice of the Liberal candidate, who only succeeded in

gaining a very partial hearing, much to the disgust of his supporters, who were proud of their elect; and longed for the opportunity when his talents would be displayed in justification of their choice.

The Mayor called for a show of hands, which was decided to be in Mr. Leigh's favour, amid the wild hurrahs of the Orangemen.

A poll was then demanded on behalf of Mr. Levinge.

"What unbounded assurance that young Evelyn displayed," said Mrs. Davis to Kate Howard, as they left the gallery together.

"I wish," replied Kate, "for the credit of the county, that we had some one of like ability on our side."

Returning from Mr. Leigh's lodgings, whither his friends had escorted him, Eveleyn encountered Kate Howard and Mrs. Davis. The former returned his bow, and held out her hand with one of her sweetest smiles.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Evelyn, on your speech; not that I agree with your opinions; still I confess that it was the speech of the day, though probably you will consider this a poor compliment."

This address was so unexpected, Eveleyn blushed scarlet, and stammered out, "You do me too much honour, Miss Howard."

"I wish," she remarked, "that that Orange rosette were changed for a Blue one."

"Thank you," said he; "I am in the place where, according to my convictions, I ought to stand."

"So I believe," said Kate with another smile and bow, and passed on.

Wild and foolish were the fancies that rushed through Eveleyn's brain as he reflected on this unexpected interview. The old dream came back again for a time ; but when he reached his father's house, he found Mrs. Aylmer in the dining-room, complimenting the old gentleman on his son's success. The memories of the past were soon eclipsed in the bright sunshine of the present ; and Eveleyn drank of the intoxicating draught of praise administered by a lovely woman.

Oh, dangerous draught ! that soothes, fascinates, and too oft destroys !

As Mrs. Davis recovered her self-possession, which Kate had so completely deprived her of by stopping her old friend in the street, she exclaimed, "I wonder you condescended to notice that upstart boy."

Had Kate answered, "I would not have done so, only you spoke so disparagingly of him ; and, moreover, I wished to pique you a little bit," she would have spoken part of the truth ; the remainder found expression in her reply : "I can admire merit even in an opponent !"

"But then he was so insulting to our order !"

"How much more than the truth did he speak ?"

Mrs. Davis observed, by way of changing the theme, "Have you seen the new silks and India muslins at Keith's ?"

"No, I have not."

CHAPTER XV.

THE ELECTION.

A MURKY morning ushered in the next day, when the free and independents were to record their opinions at the poll.

The Blue and Orange committees were in a high state of excitement. Orders were given, countermanded, and re-issued every five minutes; but, in spite of the confusion, carriages were despatched for reluctant voters. The pecuniary difficulties of others were kindly taken into consideration, and promises were distributed profusely on all sides.

The polling continued steadily until one o'clock, when the Liberals were thirty a-head. The Mayor was in great glee, the Bank Co. smiled comfortably, and Eveleyn looked happy.

Not so the leaders in the other camp. The little squire swore; Levinge moved about, a living Leyden jar, ready to discharge its bottled lightning into the first object it encountered; Mr. Ethelfield pulled a

long face; Salmon lisped anathemas; and Charley Davis appeared to have lost every memory of a joke.

But if the heads of the factions were earnestly engaged, there was no less zeal and feeling displayed by their myrmidons. Several voters proved unruly on either side. Some, who had been affectionately remembered by both parties, were not disposed to plump for either candidate; and others were holding off, in the expectation of there being a rise in the market towards the close. Among the former was our acquaintance Mr. Thrush. Since the preceding night that worthy individual had been afflicted with a perpetual thirst; and having a wholesome objection to paying for his liquor when others would treat him, this innocent peculiarity had not been forgotten by his friends in the Orange camp. First, they had tried persuasion, then remonstrance, then persuasion, remonstrance, and gin, then gin, brandy, and persuasion; but by twelve o'clock brandy was resorted to alone; a beverage which he gave the preference to, not entirely because he liked it, but because it cost his entertainers more.

About noon, then, we will introduce the reader to the interior of his dwelling.

Uncombed, unshaven, unwashed, Mr. Thrush, with a short black pipe in his mouth, a dirty paper cap stuck on one side, a complicated plaster arrangement over one eye, his apron rolled up, and his coat off, sat beside his kitchen fire.

The dear companion of his joys and sorrows was his *vis-à-vis*, and out of pure good nature, and a literal de-

sire to partake of her husband's cup, whatever it might be, she had also made no small sacrifice of appearance. It was a doubt whether she had not sat up all night also. Perhaps it was excitement or sympathy, but, at any rate, her face was decidedly flushed.

There were two other figures in the room, both recumbent on the floor, both victims to the hardness of Mr. Thrush's head, while a third sat midway between the host and hostess; and in the centre of the group stood a little round table, on which were some empty spirit bottles, and two others full, together with the hot water and sugar.

"Thrush, my dear," said his wife, "'tis time as you made up your mind."

"I don't shink so, old gal; eish plenty o'time."

"I think Mrs. Thrush is right," said the remaining conscious individual, a well-known tippler in Bricklinton, by profession a lawyer's clerk, and invaluable on an occasion of this sort; for, on an average, he could see three men under the table, taking them fresh in rotation. But now Mr. Arded had found his match, and he felt within himself that his reputation hung on an even balance.

"Hold your tongue, Arded, and help yrself, and d—— the expense," said Mr. Thrush, pouring out a glass for himself with a spirit of liberality much to be commended.

Arded somewhat unwillingly complied, but Mr. Thrush's eye was on him, and an unjust attempt to put

in an increased quantity of water was met by the polite rebuke,—“D—— you ! no shuffling.”

“Time is passing,” said his wife, “and you can’t afford to offend both parties.”

“I don’t care for anybody in Bricklinton. I’m independent; aren’t I, Arded?”

“Of course you are !”

“Who told you?”

“I know it !”

“Arded, you’re a gentleman !”

“And so are you !” replied that individual.

“They thought to buy me,” continued the immaculate creature “They thought to buy me. D—— the Tories—the tyrants ! I’m for the friendsh of the people.”

“Come and vote for Mr. Leigh, then.”

“Don’t be in a hurry, Arded. I can’t part from your company yet. You’re a jolly good fellow. There’s three chickens,” continued he, pointing in disgust to the inebriate visitors on the floor. “Ha ! ha ! Pretty fellows, indeed ! Why, they aren’t fit to make tenpenny tacks. They thought Thomas Thrush was a fool !”

“Come, come,” said his wife, “’tis past one o’clock. Go down now with Mr. Arded, and vote like a man for Mr. Leigh.”

This kind advice was ungraciously received, and the gentle woman, in strong vernacular, was requested to try a warmer climate.

All attempts to move him at this time failed, so Arded gave the task up for an hour. It was approach-

ing three; the time was becoming short, and his own eyelids were growing heavy, so getting upon his feet he approached the smith, and taking him by the shoulder, he attempted to use a little good-natured force.

"No, no, my man," said Thrush, who was in the best of humours, "I aren't going yet;" and pulling the clerk down upon his knees, he bade him sit still, under pain of having his hide converted into parchment. Mr. Arded, not wishing to be acquainted with deeds to be engrossed on his own back, obeyed the behest. Neither was he permitted to move until he had swallowed another tumbler of grog, which was so hot and strong that, to use his own expression, it made him see sparks before his eyes. After this he was permitted to resume his position on his chair.

"I hates them!" said Mrs. Thrush.

"What do you know about Tories?" ejaculated her husband.

"As much as you, any day."

"As much as me!" cried Thrush contemptuously.

"I knows the shoe print of a Tory squire's horse a mile off. Down with the Blues! Down with the tyrants! Orange for ever!"

"Orange for ever!" hiccuped Mr. Arded. "Plump for Leigh! Come 'long, ole fella!"

"No hurry," said Thrush; "I'm going to drink their healths."

"We'll come back an' do't," said Arded.

"No," rejoined the smith, "I don't shtir till we drinks ther 'elth. Fill your glass."

"No more at present for me," said Arded.

"You shall!"

"I shan't!"

"I'll make you!"

"Don't be silly, Thrush," interposed Mrs. T.

Taking no notice of the interruption, he poured out two brimming glasses. The wretched Arded was obliged to obey; but he had scarcely strength left to put the empty tumbler on the table, when he fell senseless on the floor.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Thrush, his voice becoming thicker. "I shought Ishd shee last o' him."

It was half past three. Mrs. Thrush's patience was worn threadbare, and seeing her husband rapidly becoming helpless, she attempted to remove the spirits.

"Whatsh ye doin', ooman?" No answer. "Shtop, I shay!" and putting his brawny hand upon the little table, he attempted to prevent its removal. Mrs. Thrush was not to be trifled with; her blood was up. So she dashed her husband's hand aside, and seized the table to carry it off. In her hurry she did not perceive the position of Mr. Arded, who lay across her path; and stumbling against his body, she and her freight were launched upon the floor, where she lay half stupefied amid an avalanche of broken glass. At this juncture, a strong party of Orangemen burst into the room, shouting, "Thrush! Thrush! where are you?"

"Here," rejoined that happy individual, and with an air of drunken gravity pointing to the floor, "thersh where the Blues oughst be!"

"Come along!" roared the new comers; and seizing the elector by his shoulders, they bore him off triumphant, he shouting, as he staggered along the streets, "Orange for ever! Down with the Blues!"

Mr. Ethelfield had just finished breakfast, when word was brought him that the Orangemen had sent out a fly to Hayfield, to bring in old William Madder.

"You don't say so!" said Mr. Ethelfield, jumping up. "The impudence of these Radicals surpasses everything."

The facts were these. Mr. Ethelfield possessed a small farm situated a few miles out of Bricklinton. The tenant, William Madder, was an octogenarian, all of whose faculties were very much impaired, and the old man's health was also delicate.

Madder's political opinions were entirely bound up in the colour of his party. He and his father before him had voted orange, as he expressed it, and other politics he knew not. Mr. Ethelfield had extorted a promise of neutrality from the old man; but fearing that the persuasions of the opposite party would prove effectual if the opportunity offered, it was with no small consternation that he heard of the unprincipled attempt of the Rads to get his tenant to vote in accordance with all the principle he knew; so, ordering out his carriage, he drove with speed to Hayfield, just in time to rescue Madder, who was about getting into the enemy's fly.

Partly by force, and partly by persuasion, he succeeded in obtaining possession of the old man's person,

brought him to his house, and lodged him safely in his back parlour, giving Mrs. Ethelfield strict charge to remain on guard ; also to supply an abundance of luncheon, and try her hand at conversion at the eleventh hour. This being accomplished, Ethelfield hurried to the committee-room, where he related his exploit.

Mrs. Ethelfield was a willing agent, and lost no time ere she commenced the attack, taking care to ingratiate herself in the first place by exercising profuse hospitality.

" I think, Madder," said the lady, " you are a good-natured man ?"

" Eh, ma'm ? I'm hard on my hearin'."

The observation was repeated in a louder key.

" Middlin', ma'm."

" Will you do me a favour, Madder ?"

" What's that, ma'm ?"

" I want you to vote for Mr. Levinge."

" Is he Orange, ma'm ?"

" No ; Blue."

" I always votes orange, and my father afore me."

" Take another glass of wine, Madder !"

" If you please, ma'm."

So the subject was dropped for awhile. Presently the attack was renewed. But no other answer than the one already given could be extracted.

Mrs. Ethelfield then endeavoured by an ingenious process of reasoning, more original than conclusive, to show that blue meant orange. Still the old man's answer was—

"I allus votes orange."

Three o'clock came. The numbers posted in Levinge's committee room were : Levinge 230 ; Leigh 243 ; and there only remained thirty-five who could be brought to the poll ; some of whom were stanch opponents. In half an hour all these had polled save five, and Mr. Leigh was in a majority of one.

Levinge had just returned from the booth, scarcely able to restrain his temper.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I believe the Radicals have beaten us !"

"Impothible !" said Salmon.

"And," continued Levinge, "if there is one man more than another to whom we are indebted for this disgrace, it is young Evelyn. Every vote that he could influence he has secured. His opposition has been of the most determined kind. I have much to thank him for."

"I'll tell you what, though," said Salmon, "he thall thweat for it thome day !"

"You overrate his power," said Mr. Howard.

"Not at all, I assure you," said the nephew. "He has worked unremittingly. Over and over again have I heard persons remark in the street : 'Did you hear young Evelyn speak last night ? If you didn't 'tis a pity ; there's nobody in Clayshire like him.'"

Meanwhile Mr. Ethelfield had left the room. His first step was to engage a sedan chair, which he ordered to follow him to his house immediately. He then hurried home, and entered the back parlour.

"What does Madder say now?"

"He is as obstinate as a mule," said Mrs. Ethelfield.

"Will you vote for Mr. Levinge to please me?" said his landlord.

"I allus votes orange. Orange is my colour," said the helpless old man.

"If I mince matters with this old dolt," said Ethelfield, "the election will be lost. We are only one ahead, and if there should be a scrutiny, I know of one vote that must go. Madder," said he, "you must do as I say."

"I can't, sir," replied the old man, and added, imploringly, "Don't ax me, sir!"

"Come, this is too much. I must have my way."

"Oh, no! please not, sir."

"Then take your choice. You are half a year's rent in arrear; I will put a writ in next week if you refuse to vote for the Blues."

Madder looked stupefied. There was a clatter of feet in the hall. A servant entered, and said: "The chair is come, sir."

Taking Madder by the arm, he put him in, closed the door, and ordered the men to move on. With some difficulty they made their way through the crowd. The hands of the town clock stood at five minutes to four as Mr. Ethelfield entered the booth with old Madder. The orange clerks bit their lips with rage.

"Who do you vote for?" was the question.

"Mr. Levinge," was the reply.

Thus was the last man polled ; and Levinge had a majority of two.

The police had plenty of amusement that night. Barrels were broached, and heads were broken. The town was divided into two factions, between whom the most rancorous feeling existed. Tradesmen were exasperated against the gentry. The gentry were equally bitter against the tradesmen, and every shopkeeper who voted for Mr. Leigh became henceforth a marked man, from whom none of the Blues would buy a pound of sugar or a yard of cloth. A line of demarcation was drawn between the Tories and Liberals. Each party had their artificers, their grocers, haberdashers, tailors, lawyers ; the doctors were the only people indiscriminately employed. In one particular only there was agreement, and that was, in heaping on each other all the vituperative epithets that the dictionary contains, together with certain others not mentioned by any modern lexicographer.

Loud were the threats on the part of the Oranges that there should be a petition, a scrutiny ; Mr. Levinge should be unseated ; the corruption was unprecedented ; the bribery frightful. No one was more energetic than Eveleyn ; and as there are spies everywhere, so it became known in the Blue camp that he was endeavouring to stir the embers of opposition into a blaze, and the feeling against him individually became more marked than ever. To his intense disappointment, however, he could get no one to support him in the matter, and it was

absurd to attempt the task of unseating Levinge single-handed. So, mourning over the want of energy and public spirit, he was obliged to remain inactive, inwardly disgusted with his political friends. Had they clean hands, they would doubtless have gone with him ; but having been quite as unscrupulous as their opponents, they remembered the old adage, *The more you stir a dirty puddle, &c.*

Eveleyn at last began to suspect the reason of their inaction, and it cost him no little mental suffering to find that, while inveighing against Tory corruption, on the side of his friends there was equal laxity of moral principle. In reality the election had been a trial of strength. Each party had brought every engine to bear to aid their own cause, and the result was, on the whole, a questionable victory, and a glorious defeat. A defeat which taught the Liberals their power, and showed the Tories their weakness.

The second day after the events which we have just been describing, Dr. Ellwood was called in to Thrush. He found him writhing in agony in his bed. The wound he had received from Charley Davis had, in consequence of his unceasing potations, become inflamed, and erysipelas had made its appearance. Before the morning he expired in all the horrors of delirium.

His death caused no small excitement, and his friends insisted on a coroner's inquest. The verdict—"Died from natural causes"—disappointed the mob, who looked for nothing less than "manslaughter," because a gentleman had struck the blow.

CHAPTER XVI.

POETICS.

MORE than a week elapsed after the election before Eveleyn could resume his usual quiet life and easy studies. About this time he was sitting in his room one evening. Before him on the table lay a volume of a translation of Fichte, which he had been vainly attempting to understand. As often as he endeavoured to concentrate his thoughts on the subtleties of the German philosopher, an utterly irrelevant train of ideas would flit across his mind, leading him some wild dance, without any defined ending. At last he shut up the book in despair, and turning his chair to the fire, he put his feet upon the fender, and was soon lost in reverie.

It is not within the purpose of this history to follow him through his flights of fancy, to inquire whither the spirit carried him. After a time he returned to mundane considerations, and taking a paper from his desk, he said to himself: "I will read over Mrs. Aylmer's manuscript once more, and reply to it."

If the reader is not curious he may skip the rest of this chapter; the option rests with himself. We have fulfilled our duty in warning him.

MRS. AYLMER'S MS.

"After we parted on the morning we walked by the river, our conversation on the subject of poetry recurred very forcibly to my mind. I have taken advantage of one or two leisure hours to commit my ideas to paper, and shall be glad to receive your comments on this production.

"What is poetry? What constitutes a poet? What is the present condition and future prospects of the art? These four questions I propose to answer, not dogmatically, but rather in the spirit of an inquirer.

"What is poetry? The soul's response to the manifold manifestations, within and without us, of beauty and sublimity. As the pupil of Gamaliel expresses it, 'The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made:' that is to say, the Divine impress is left upon all the works of nature, and poetry is the vehicle through which it is conveyed to our apprehension. This observation does not only apply to external things, but also to the mind within. Whatever far-off tints of former glory, whatever truth, whatever power, it possesses, is best declared, and in the most appropriate dress set forth, when clothed in the language of poetry.

"Poetry is to the intellectual life what prayer is to

the spiritual. The one is the direct means of communication between the Father of spirits and our souls ; the other also, in its noblest form, leads us up the stairs unto the golden altar that is before the throne. This is what Coleridge felt when he wrote :—

‘ Earth with her thousand voices praises God !’

Or Byron, when he exclaims :—

‘ My altars are the mountains and the ocean,
Earth, air, stars.’

And was revealed to David, when he saw in material light the robe of Divinity, in that sublime line—‘ Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment.’ Conveying to our minds a grand idea of the infinite glory of the Creator, that light which makes everything material clear to us, is, with all its subtilty and brightness, a robe to conceal the still greater, or rather, unimaginable brightness of the I Am. Thus poetry anticipates our knowledge, and brings before us things that are above the comprehension of our finite faculties, though never contrary to reason.

“ It conveys to us, as it were, tidings from some fatherland ; gives us pictures of that which is lovelier and holier than we possess, spiritualizes our tone of thought, and elevates all our conceptions.

“ This is the noblest and grandest kind of poetry ; but what is true of the greater is also true of the less. As the former has its domain in the highest realms of thought, and conveys to our minds the grandest truths in the most appropriate manner, moulding them

so as to render them more easily accessible to us, so the latter seizes hold of hidden beauties, and strings them, like pearls, for our use.

“Poetry (of the first order) deals rather with what we anticipate than that which is our own; a thousand thoughts that could never be made known by plain prose, become, as Young says, ‘heirs to speech through the interposition of the rhythmic art, and are translated into things of beauty which are joys for ever.’ It is concerned, especially, about the grand in nature, in action, and in thought, and the sublimely beautiful, in contradistinction to soft and gentle beauty. It gives us pictures of all that the imagination can conceive of heroism, valour, and virtue; it explores all the recesses of the mind, all the aspects of the outer world, and all the phases of the inner. It is not a bare and literal transcript of what is seen, but it is the expression of the secret aspirations of the soul for that which is nobler, better, and happier. Poetry is the voice of the emotions, the utterance of the passions; and in this sphere also it is allowed a license which borders on exaggeration, since it is its province to transcend the actual, connecting our minds with the far-off by links of golden thought.

“In a word, poetry is a revelation inspired by the imagination. If this subject were to be pursued into all its ramifications, it would be our duty to inquire into the nature of imagination, but this would be to extend the limits of this paper to a volume; suffice it, then, to say that the imagination is that faculty by

which we call into existence ideas of non-existing and of possibly existing things, circumstances, actions, states of mind, and so forth, and the highest development of it is in inventing new and grand combinations of thought, which strike our fancies with the force of truth, and charm us with their originality. If these premises be admitted, it follows that novelty and originality, no less than truth, beauty, and power, are essentials of poetry, while the manner in which these conditions of things are embodied, *i. e.* the style of versification employed, is purely mechanical.

“The second question is, what constitutes a poet? Not only the ability to write verses, to arrange sentences metrically, although this is part of his art. He should be a keen observer of animate and inanimate nature; he should be intimately acquainted with the extent and mode of action of the emotions and the passions, and the whole constitution of the human mind should be thoroughly understood by him. He must possess rare powers of invention; his mind should be like a mirror, wherein is glassed the reflections of the external and internal revelations of the Divinity. He must see more in common things than other men see; the storms will have music for him; he will hear in their voice not only the sound of the destroyer’s pinions, but the rolling diapason of the winds. He must be not only an interpreter of that which lies on the surface, but he must be able to lay hold on the esoteric meaning of things, and make it plain, so that he who reads shall wonder that he never

beheld the beauty until the poet had declared it. He must avoid wild, or, rather, strained conceits and unnatural fancies. With the vision of the seer he must roam the earth, and his utterance must be in the spirit of simplicity, though with the power of an angel. Then they who hear him shall acknowledge his voice, and recognise in him the inspiration of genius. Above everything, the poet must be true to nature, so that all who approach may perceive the fidelity of his representations. His intellect must have power to penetrate to the farthest limits of thought ; but though his range may be telescopic, he must not, in contemplating the far off, omit to survey that which is near. A keen observer, a patient inquirer, he must condescend to little things, gathering jewels from the dross, and pearls from the rubbish garnered in the storehouse of experience. Possessed of alchymic skill, where the vulgar hear discord, he will evolve harmony. Where the common eye rests upon poverty or rags, he will lift the veil and delight us with the beauty of the spirit within. Where, to the uninitiated, ignorance is only to be found, he will draw lessons replete with wisdom, and bid us be uncovered in the presence of moral dignity. Tearing down the outer wall, he will show us Christ in the temple of the heart, and fill our souls with worship.

“ The present condition of poetry !—All histories go back to an heroic age, an age of Titans, giants, and heroes. Seen through the halo of the past, objects loom larger than life, and everything is superior to that which is

present with us. Of old, the men lived longer, and were mightier; the women, if not more chaste, were at least more lovely. Monsters inhabited the land and sea; serpents stopped the march of armies; a wild boar laid waste a principality; a dragon sufficed to terrify the inhabitants of a city.

“Bearing this truth in mind, that most men have a blind, idolatrous reverence for antiquity, and place the golden age behind our generation, a degree of caution is required, lest, in exalting the great ones who have lived, we do not sufficiently esteem those who are our contemporaries. Therefore, in asserting that the great poets have been, we must bring proof, from the nature of things, that it is so. We must inquire, then, is poetry confined to a limited area, or is it boundless?

“If it be true that novelty and originality are essential elements of poetry, the answer is not difficult to find. Poetry, being the offspring of the imagination, is individual—that is, each writer must present the world with his own revelation, the revelation given him through himself—and this must be a different one from those already treasured up in literature. Herein is the distinction between art and science—the student makes himself acquainted with what his predecessors have accomplished, then proceeds to verify their work, and in pursuing their inquiries he lights upon fresh discoveries, which add to the treasury of facts, and enrich posterity. But the poet must strike out a path for himself; alone he must travel through the world; alone he must gaze upon the

sunset, ponder on the stars, or watch the heave of the ocean. He must avoid the footsteps of those who have gone before him. The recorded observations of other bards are so many beacons to warn him from the shoals of plagiarism.

“A grand or beautiful thought once appropriately uttered is a whole, and admits of no improvement. A noble truth once well said is said for ever. Moreover, poetry does not admit of word-splitting—it is in its nature synthetical. It does not admit of much amplification—detail is fatal to it. It best conveys truth, not by the dialectic method, but by appealing at once to the judgment, to the innate appreciation of that which is true. It strikes, it does not demonstrate; it presents a picture, not a syllogism. Poetry is incapable of developing new truths; science is ever registering fresh facts. Poetry deals with the aspects of nature; science treats of laws—involved laws—of which we have not disentangled half. Poetry is the language of passion and emotion, and gives force to principles, moral truth, and religion. Philosophy treats of the same subjects, but discards the imagination as fatal to her welfare. Poetry, then, is chiefly concerned about the aspects of nature, the passions, emotions, morality, and religion.

“The aspects of nature are various—in the language of hyperbole, countless; but not so in fact, especially in their salient features. They are either mountainous, rocky, undulating, or flat; either wooded or devoid of wood; sterile or fertile; covered

with verdure—verdure with flowers—or else barren ; either watered or little watered, or without any ; either with lakes or rivers, or devoid of both ; rivers and lakes are large or small, rapid, smooth, deep or shallow, muddy or clear, sinuous or straight, picturesque or uninteresting. Skies are cloudy or cloudless ; the atmosphere is bright or gloomy, clear or misty, cold or warm. The ocean is either rough or smooth, or tempestuous ; its shores are muddy, bold, rocky, or sandy, and all changes other than these and {the like are produced by atmospheric effect. In the same manner the characteristics of animate nature may be enumerated ; they are numerous, but not innumerable ; limited, not infinite.

“ When science treats of the same subject, she proceeds to analyze, weigh, measure, or compare ; but poetry has nothing to do with the constituent parts of the soil—that is the sphere of chemistry ; or the stratification of the mountains—that is the domain of geology ; or with the classification of leaves and petals—there botany steps in ; or with the philosophy of atmospheric phenomena, which pertains to meteorology or electricity ; and in like manner with all the cosmical details. If we carry the argument into the realms of morality, religion, emotion, and passion, we arrive at like results. Moral and religious truths are stationary, except, perhaps, in their application, but abstractedly they are so in virtue of their nature, immutable.

“ The emotions and the passions admit of no change in themselves, and but little in their regulation ; there-

fore the conclusion is inevitable—the sphere of poetry is circumscribed by comparatively narrow limits.

“ If we take Shakespeare only, as an example, what phase of human nature has he left unexplored? Following in his wake, how little remains to be accomplished! He has moved up and down, through the avenues of thought, searched into every nook and corner of the mind, and laid all nature under tribute; and there is scarcely a possible action, feeling, fancy, or idea to which he has not given appropriate expression. Truly is his genius described as universal.

“ Then add to his name the long list of poet-kings of Greece, Italy, Rome, Germany, France, England, and tell the aspirant to the laurel-crown that to be entitled to the wreath of immortality, he must give the world something as grand, as beautiful, as their works, taken from the same sources, and yet stamped with originality. Would he not reply, ‘ Oh! hopeless task! impossible endeavour?’ He is vanquished before he begins.

“ If by any chance all the poetry the world possesses were destroyed—if no relics of past inspiration remained—poetic genius would again step forth, and charm the world with beauty. The spirit that spoke of old is not dead, but it lacks occasion to exert its energy. The sacred fire still burns within the soul, but the necessities of the art impose restrictions that cannot be broken through. New plots may be invented, untried schemes may encourage the enthusiast; these, however, are but the husks, the outer walls of the temple; and even these must be adorned with the

similes of the old themes. Light and shadow, breeze and storm, sunshine and cloud, river and stream, hill and plain, again must play their part, as they have played it. But the soul of song, the spirit of poetry, the living principle within, which is nothing more or less than the image of our own minds, the reflex of our intellectual and passionate being, this must be ever the same, and does not admit of variations other than we know; and our experience teaches us that, multiform as the changes are, they are only finite still. Even if this were not so, the age itself is, from its extended and increasing knowledge, unfavourable to the muse.

“As we acquire more intimate acquaintance with the laws of the universe, in all their scientific detail, so do we begin to discard imagination, which pleases our fancies—for after a time the soul tires of shadows, wearies of mirages, and longs for the living water.

“In an age when Homer lived, the people accepted the extravagance of the bard as sober fact. To the ancient Greeks it was a grand but not a wild conception that the gods should personally interest themselves in the fate of Ilium, and join in the combats on the plain. The fabled exploits of Arthur and his knights were once regarded as actual history; and when fictions like these could be accepted as literal truths, imagination preponderated over reason, and poetry became a necessity of the time.

“By degrees, however, education works a revolution; giants cease to be believed in—monsters no longer inhabit the woods; chivalry becomes a tradition; a com-

plete change takes place in the public taste ; another kind of poetry is demanded, and the want, sooner or later, is supplied.

“ An illustration of how scientific knowledge militates against poetry is found in Milton’s description of the six days’ work of creation :—

“ ‘ Then staid the fervid wheels, and in his hand
He took the golden compasses, prepared
In God’s eternal store, to circumscribe
This universe, and all created things.’

“ Then follows the highly imaginative description of the work of each successive day, until

“ ‘ Here finished He, and all that He had made
Viewed ; and, behold ! all was entirely good :
So even and morn accomplished the sixth day.

* * * *

Up he rode,
Followed with acclamation and the sound
Symphonious of ten thousand harps, that tuned
Angelic harmonies. The earth, the air
Resounded.
The heavens and all the constellations rung ;
The planets in their station listening stood,
While the bright pomp ascended jubilant.
‘ Open, ye everlasting gates !’ they sung,
‘ Open, ye heavens ! your living doors : let in
The Great Creator, from His work returned,
Magnificent—His SIX DAYS’ WORK A WORLD !’

“ What a sublime picture is here presented to us—the Creator sweeping the world out of chaos with his golden compasses ; the mountains at His command lifting up their

“ ‘ Broad bare backs into the clouds,’

the seas and waters impetuously rushing into their beds and channels. Then the command, "Let there be light," followed by the instantaneous appearance of the sun and moon, the sowing of the firmament with stars—with all the wondrous operations of creation completed in six days.

"To the imagination there is nothing incongruous in all this; on the contrary, it realizes the idea of Omnipotence accomplishing his work by the exercise of supernal might. It presents us with the most magnificent spectacle that we can conceive of Power. In an age of limited knowledge no one questions the truth of the picture, while all feel its sublimity.

"Had Milton lived in our day, and been possessed of our knowledge of geology, he could not have written in this manner; and even if he could, such a description given to the world for the first time, at this period, would lose no small share of beauty because of its disregard of sober fact, a defect which would be fatal in a reasoning age, for even the extravagance of the muse must not transcend the bounds of probability.

"Then if he adopted the geologic account of the earth's history, only imagine a poem where the action extends over myriads of years! Fancy a page devoted to the Plesiosauri, and another to the wars of the Ichthyosauri! The idea is preposterous. In scenes like these the imagination yields to reason; and instead of the notion of Deity, by an arbitrary effort of the will, forming the earth and its inhabitants in less than a week, we have the more instructive fact to contemplate

of an intelligent First Cause working by laws, through a series of ages, until the magnificent result is attained in the glory of the universe.

“As the nations gain intellectual strength, so they look with a half-pitying smile at the days of credulity and unreasoning belief, when witches raised storms, and slew their enemies by spells—when ghosts haunted old houses, and the devils worked marvels in earth and air—when men believed in portents and signs, and when the supernal world was supposed to be in intimate communion with our own—when the belief in one wonder only prepared the mind for the exercise of greater credulity.

“It must not be supposed that poetry is the product of this intellectual condition only. These observations simply serve to show that the imagination, whence the muse has birth, exercised a more potent influence in the past than it does in the present; and the parent spring being in time circumscribed and shut up in narrower bounds, by the stringent requirements of reason, the whole area in which poetry exists is diminished—added to this, that the only objects about which it can exercise itself are easily numbered—that originality must be a *sine qua non*—and a sufficient cause is made out why we have no great poet, and wherefore such a one is not likely to arise at least in our day.

“This conclusion has immediate reference to the future of poetry. It almost amounts to a demonstration that for a very long period the world will not receive any important additions to its poetic treasures,

except, perhaps, in the domain of philosophic poetry, such as we have lately received in 'In Memoriam,' a poem replete with truth, beauty, and originality, exquisitely musical, and very suggestive. Christianity, also, has no real poem, except the 'Paradise Regained,' and this work is hardly entitled to the distinction of 'great.' In the sublimely-beautiful character of the Saviour, in the wisdom and harmony of his teachings, lie the materials for a great poetic imagination to work upon. But to treat it adequately, something very little less than divine inspiration is necessary.

"M. A——.

"Bricklinton, Feb. 14th, 18—"

"Like everything women write," said Eveleyn, closing the manuscript—"that which they perceive from their own stand-point must be true. They set out with an assumption, and every fact that tells against their theory is omitted, and frequently premises are made to yield unfair conclusions. Still, Mrs. Aylmer's paper is suggestive, and I suppose she expects an answer; perhaps it will be best, though, if I reply *viva voce*."

Putting his feet on the fender, he folded his arms, and began thinking of Kate Howard by turns with Mrs. Aylmer. Poor Eveleyn! one lady had refused him; the other was a married woman, and he was not a *debauché*. But, married or single, he dared not question his heart concerning her.

CHAPTER XVII.

UNDER-GROUND.

NINE months had rolled round since we saw Levinge and the mining engineer, Jones, struggling through the larch woods of the valley of the Lem; nine months not idly passed, not frivolously wasted. The echoes seemed to have become tired of repeating the strokes of the axe and the sound of the hammer, and the hand of man had wrought a vast change in the scene.

Long rows of workmen's cottages had been run up. Two huge blast furnaces for smelting iron ore had been built, a handsome manager's house was nearly completed, and the miners had penetrated more than a thousand yards into the centre of the hill. As they were proceeding through the broken stratification, in the expectation of reaching the true coal vein beyond the disturbed ground, they had encountered a great deal of water, so that it was necessary to erect a steam engine to pump it out. This contingency had not been anticipated, and an unexpected outlay of some additional

thousands was the result. Difficulties had also to be encountered in the construction of the tram-way. It was found that to reach the canal a very considerable detour had to be made, or else the land of another proprietor would have to be passed through.

Levinge, with his usual impetuosity, had ordered the work to proceed as if there could be no doubt of his obtaining this piece of ground. But, much to his disgust, he found the owner was determined to resist his progress, or insist on the payment of a disproportionately large sum.

It then became a matter of calculation whether it would be better to take the longer route, or pay the money demanded. But so much work had been already completed, and the ultimate saving in wear and tear, by taking the nearest road to the water, would be so great, that the latter alternative was decided upon, though it cost two thousand pounds.

Money, however, abounded, and the freedom with which it was spent excited the astonishment of the natives. The rustics said he had found a "chist of goold." The unenlightened opened their eyes, because Levinge's embarrassments were no secret; but the knowing ones shook their heads and whispered, "The Jews!"

The mining operations on the top of the hill had been partially successful. Many hundred tons of iron ore were dug out and heaped up in large piles, ready to be conveyed to the furnaces. The ore, so the old men said, was not of the best quality. The sanguine

observed that the quantity was a sufficient compensation. Opinion was divided.

One fine morning in the beginning of May, Levinge sat at breakfast, in his hand the *Times*, a pile of unopened letters before him.

The servant enters, bringing in a card on a salver.

Levinge took it up and read,—“ Mr. C. F. Smith.”

“ Show him up,” said he ; and presently the Manager of the *Cosmopolitan* made his appearance.

“ This is an unexpected pleasure,” said Levinge, rising ; “ I am glad to see you, sir.”

“ Have you not received my letter, then ?” said the Manager.

“ No, I have not !” Then turning to the unopened pile—“ Here it is !” said he ; “ but sit down. Have you breakfasted ?”

“ Thank you, yes, two hours ago.”

After a little desultory conversation, Smith proceeded to business.

“ Our board meets next Monday,” he said, “ and as your account is a heavy one, I thought it best to run down and inspect the works, so that I might be able to answer any questions.”

“ I am glad you have come,” said Levinge ; “ I will go over the scene of our operations with you. We are getting on famously ; the colliers are now cutting through the devil’s hide, and we shall be into the vein in a month, or less.”

“ The devil’s what, did you say ?”

“ Hide !”

"I don't understand you."

"It is a technical term, or rather a local expression, for the layer or stratum lying immediately upon the coal. In fact, it is the indication of success."

"That is satisfactory," said Smith, "and I am the more glad to hear it, because your account is growing larger, and another of your acceptances will be due next week."

"What of that? I can meet it with another bill, which you can discount as usual; it will, in fact, be so much profit."

"Precisely so," said Mr. Smith; "but cannot you bring any accession of strength to the Bank? It would very much facilitate your financial operations."

Levinge mused awhile. He then said, "After we have inspected the works, I will drive you to Croft Castle, when we can introduce the matter to my uncle, Mr. Howard. When will it suit you to set out for Lemford?"

"I am at your service," replied Mr. Smith.

Levinge rang the bell. The servant entered.

"Tell James to bring the dog-cart to the door in half-an-hour."

It was high noon as the gentlemen drove up the valley. The oaks were pushing out into leaf, the larch was a sheet of bright green. Tiny vaporous clouds drifted slowly before the south wind, and gradually melted into thin air. The meadows were as verdant as the woods, and the river, bright and sparkling, rushed impetuously along, now leaping over rocks, now rushing

over some shallow, now sleeping in deep, deep blue pools, then, as if it gathered strength from repose, starting afresh on its course with more vehemence than ever. The rooks were busy in the fields, searching for food to carry home to their callow brood. The water-ouzel flew up and down from stone to stone, chirruping on its way, and the kingfisher flashed like a gleam of light between the alder stumps.

An angler was whipping the stream, every now and then landing a trout. Peaceful-looking cows lazily switched their tails over their backs as they grazed; others were lying down, chewing a cud of sweet young grass, while their calves ran races backwards and forwards over the fields. Here and there a cottage peeped out between the trees, from the chimneys of which a thread of blue smoke twisted its way up into the higher regions of the air. But there was little of human life to be seen—there was no bustle, no strife, apparently no toil—the valley seemed to be the home of happiness and rest.

Even Smith, despite the interminable interest sums that were ever occupying his brain, was deeply impressed with the beauty that met his gaze on all sides. "Whenever I retire from business," said he, "I shall choose some such spot as this."

"And you would tire of it in a week," replied Levinge. "Rely on it, once a man reaches half a century of years, he had better die in harness, taking care, if possible, to get some young ones in the team, to relieve him of the major part of his burden."

"But I am not fifty," said Mr. Smith, a little piqued.

"I beg your pardon," said Levinge, who could never resist the opportunity of quizzing.

"This is one of the loveliest drives I am acquainted with," observed Smith.

Levinge was by no means insensible to the beauty around him; but he could not be sentimental with a London banker. "Ah," replied he, "if you could see the valley as I have in a winter tempest, you would probably change your opinion of it as a place of residence. I was returning from Brentley one January night, about ten o'clock, the wind blowing a perfect hurricane from the east right in my teeth, accompanied with hail, that cut my face, and drove the horses frantic. Just as I reached the bridge yonder, it was as dark as the grave, there was a gust louder and wilder than any before it, and I thought I heard a crash; but the river was a roaring torrent, and no sound could be distinguished apart from the howling of the storm. The bridge that then stood there was old-fashioned and steep. I laid my whip upon the leader (I was driving tandem), and as he reached the crown of the arch he suddenly swerved round and nearly upset the trap. The brute looked me in the face, and no effort of mine could persuade him to go on. 'Get down,' said I to my servant, 'and lead the beast.' The man obeyed, and seizing the bearing rein, he succeeded in turning the horse's head partly round; but before he could get him in line, the creature reared upon his hind legs, and turning on them as on a pivot, he dashed the groom

against the parapet; when (you must remember I had no lamps) the man screamed—‘O G—! sir, the bridge is broken down!’ The flood had swept away the centre pillar, leaving a chasm between us and the other side.”

“What did you do then?” said Smith.

“Turned back, of course; but ere I had gone a mile, I found a huge elm blown across the road, completely blocking it up.”

“How awkward!” ejaculated the manager.

“Yes,” said Levinge, “so it proved. I took the leader off, and told my servant to jump him over the bole of the tree, and ride to the next cottage for help, to get the dog-cart over; but the unlucky brute made a mistake, fell, and cut both his knees to the bone.”

“The man?” said Smith.

“No! The horse, unfortunately; he was worth a hundred guineas in the morning; I sold him for a ten-pound note the week after.”

“How much higher up are the works?”

“You shall see them at the next turning,” was the answer.

The promise was fulfilled.

“Dear me,” said Smith, “the furnaces do not seem larger than ovens.”

“Wait until you are near them, before you criticise their dimensions,” said Levinge. “At this distance you contrast them, unconsciously perhaps, with the hills against which they rest. When you are on the spot, you will not imagine that they are so tiny.”

However speculative Mr. Smith was, he was not deficient in business judgment if he cared to exercise it. At the same time, no one could be more easily led away by the plausibilities of a clever talker ; and once a man of sanguine temperament is induced to engage in any unaccustomed enterprise where the expenditure is large, and the profits problematical, the chances are ten to one that he will be ruined.

" Good morning, Jones," said Levinge, as they drove up to the office.

" Good morning, sir !"

" Mr. Smith of London—Mr. Jones," said Levinge, introducing them.

" I have had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Smith before," replied Jones.

" You have the advantage of me," observed the manager, raising his hat.

" Mint, Alder, and Co.," observed Jones, laconically.

" In Northumberland ?"

" Just so."

" Of course ; now I remember you—hope you are quite well, sir," said Smith ; and turning to Levinge, " You are fortunate, sir, in obtaining the services of my friend Mr. Jones ; when you mentioned his name to me, it had escaped my recollection that we were acquainted."

" How are the works progressing, Jones ?" inquired the proprietor.

" With astonishing rapidity."

" When do you expect to be in blast ?"

" In a month."

"That is expeditious indeed," said Smith. "Then you expect to be able to raise coals shortly?"

"The first ton came up to-day. I hope I shall be able to induce you gentlemen to accompany me underground."

"I should really like to," said Smith. "You will come, will you not, Mr. Levinge?"

"Never till I am carried," replied that gentleman, with a sardonic smile.

After examining the offices, workmen's cottages, stables, furnaces, &c., they proceeded to the mouth of the pit, or rather incline; tens of thousands of tons of rubbish had been dug up and shot over the hill side. Waggon, or, as they are technically called, trams, were being pulled up by the engine stationed at the mouth, and empty ones were descending by one line of rails as those filled with rubbish ascended.

There had been rain the previous day, and all the ground was a mass of black mud, by no means favourable to nicely-polished boots; and the universal smudge of dust, grease, and water commingled, which covered everything, colliers included, promised to all who approached a like coating of ebony polish.

"How are we to get down?" asked Smith.

"In the trams," said Jones.

"In those filthy iron things?"

"Yes, but we will cover them over with sacks."

This arrangement was soon completed.

"Are you ready?" said Jones.

"What time will it occupy?"

"An hour probably."

"I wish you a pleasant journey," said Levinge. "I shall inspect the mine."

Mr. Smith got into the tram, followed by Jones. A couple of sacks stuffed with straw served for seats. The signal was given; off went the trams, amid the puffing of the engine, the groans of the winch, and the rattle of the chain and rails.

"How infernally dark!" said Smith.

"Never been low enough down in the earth to know if your remark is correct," said Jones.

But once the waggons attained their speed, the din prevented conversation. Holding on by the side to steady himself, the bank manager wished himself in Lombard Street, and soon repented of his rashness.

He had descended nearly half way, when Jones screamed to his companion, "The roof is very low here—stoop."

The injunction came too late, and Smith's hat, coming in contact with the rock above, was smashed flat; and for some time the owner thought that his head was also broken. As all remedy was hopeless, he was obliged to sit, or rather crouch, in a state of intense nervous excitement, until, having reached the bottom of the incline, the waggons stopped. At this moment a light approached, and a face as black as a negro's peered into the waggon. The only clear part of the countenance was the white of the eyes, which looked strangely wild, contrasted with the blackness of the skin. Smith started!

"Are these men to be trusted?" said he in a whisper to Jones.

"With what? With beer do you mean?"

"No, no. You understand what I mean; they look so diabolical!"

"Just so," said Jones; "that man is a Baptist preacher!"

"Is he?"

"Yes; or a ranter of some kind. But come, let me shew you what we are doing. You won't mind a little mud! Follow me."

The manager scrambled out of the tram, and immediately plunged over his ankles in black sludge.

"You'd better take a candle in your hand," said their preaching acquaintance.

"With pleasure, if you will give me a candlestick."

"Here you be, sir, then," said the man, presenting a lighted dip, around which, close to the ignited end, a lump of clay was stuck to prevent it from burning too fast.

"No, thank ye," said Smith, in a tone of disgust.

"You'd better, sir," said the man again.

The manager again declined, and following his companion, he started on his tour of inspection; but the dim light of the candles, absorbed in the surrounding blackness, barely sufficed to illuminate the path of those who carried them; and as he stuck first one foot and then another into inky puddles which the rest avoided, he at last cried *peccavi*, and begged for a light.

The miner immediately relinquished his dip, but while

the flickering flame served to guide his footsteps, the soft grease ran down his fingers ; so the advantages were counterbalanced, and Mr. Smith felt miserable.

"By the way," said he, "is there no danger of an explosion of fire-damp, from carrying these naked candles?"

"We have not had an explosion this month," said Jones.

"Where are your Davy's safety-lamps?"

"The colliers never use them."

"How is that? How do you permit such carelessness?"

"All the men are fatalists. They believe that if they are to be blown up, scorched to death, suffocated, &c., no precaution will prevent it."

"But suppose an explosion were to take place now?"

"Just so!" briefly remarked Jones. "It would be very disagreeable. But as there is no foul air in the pit to-day, you need not be alarmed."

In some measure re-assured, Smith continued his journey, and the party soon arrived where the men were working. They had in reality got at coal; the quantity and quality were other matters. Jones said the vein was three feet thick; but to Mr. Smith's inexperienced eye the rock and rubbish were as much like coal as any other part of the levels; and as the light of the candles scarcely allowed him to see a yard in advance of his snuff-box, he in a short time gained a perfect knowledge of the appearance and working of a colliery, and expressing himself completely satisfied, he proposed to return. Jones was not disposed to let him

off so easily, so he dragged him from one point to another, now in a level, then to the furnace that was kept burning to create a draft, and afford ventilation to the workings.

At length the manager lost all patience, and insisted on returning. Jones was therefore obliged to comply ; and getting into a tram, they were hoisted to the surface.

The man at the winch could not restrain a grim smile when he saw the appearance of the London gentleman as he emerged into light. His tight trowsers looked as if they had been painted to represent Hessian boots ; his hat was smashed perfectly flat, and the crown was partly torn off. His face had not escaped, and was streaked with black from an attempt to blow his nose, while his hands would have been a credit to a sexagenarian collier.

" Shall we go in pursuit of Mr. Levinge ?" said Jones.

" No, for heaven's sake ! but give me some soap and water."

" Come to my house, and I will put you all right."

Before, however, they reached their destination, Levinge overtook them, and all his good breeding barely sufficed to prevent him from laughing outright at his partner.

" Pleasant trip ?" said he.

" Charming !" said Smith.

" Fine view at the bottom of a coal-pit, is there not ?"

" There's a very pleasant prospect, though, at any rate !" replied the manager.

"What do you mean?"

"A prospect of everybody being burnt to death some fine morning!"

"Is that all?" said Levinge. "I am much obliged for the information, and shall carefully avoid exposing myself to the perils you have encountered to-day."

The house being reached, lunch was laid on a table in a half-finished room. But, what was of infinitely more consequence to Mr. Smith, he was able to array himself in Mr. Jones's clothes, and soon appeared as fresh as a second edition of himself.

"Would you like to mount the hill again to look at the ore that has been dug up?" said Mr. Jones.

"No; not if I were to be made Governor of the Bank of England to-morrow!" replied Smith.

"In that case," said Levinge, "we had better have the horses put to."

"I quite agree with you," observed the manager.

In a short time they were again on the road. After proceeding a mile or two down the valley, they turned to the right.

"Where does this road lead to?" asked Smith.

"To the Croft."

"Who lives there?"

"My uncle Howard."

"I fear my toilet is anything but creditable," said the manager, with a distressed look.

"Don't distress yourself," said Levinge, "I will explain."

It was nearly six o'clock when they drove up the

avenue to the Croft. The house was an old-fashioned country seat, low, long, with lots of windows, and the stables facing the hall door.

The owner was at home, and the visitors were ushered into the morning room.

"Where's your master?" asked Levinge of the footman.

"In his dressing-room, sir."

"Tell him that I am here, and have brought a friend to dine with him; and show us to a bed-room."

When they entered the drawing-room, they found Kate Howard standing near the window. She was dressed in blue silk, with a lace berthe. Around her neck was a very thin gold chain, not thicker than a thread, from which was suspended a handsome locket set in diamonds. Her hair was plain in front, plaited at the back, and fastened with a large gold pin. Perhaps the style was rather severe, but the perfection of her features allowed her to take any liberty she chose with her toilette. Not that Kate Howard was too perfect to be rendered more attractive by judicious art, but she rather prided herself in proving to her friends how indifferent she was as to her appearance, or, rather, how unnecessary it was for her to take particular pains to improve it.

Levinge's eye at once caught sight of the locket—it was his gift, and he questioned whether she would have worn it had she not heard of his arrival. However, this doubt was soon settled, as she came forward with heightened colour, saying—"Edward, this is an un-

expected pleasure. What cloud have you dropped from ?”

“ One that has hovered all day over Lemford, and which has wafted hither my friend Mr. Smith (turning to him) and myself.”

Kate graciously welcomed the stranger, and Mr. Howard entering the room at this moment, the manager was presented in due form to his host.

Levinge took his cousin in to dinner, and the quartet sat down to fish and soup.

The manager was given over to the tender mercies of the little squire, and, as he afterwards said, it was the hardest night's work he ever experienced, in endeavouring to keep up the appearance of a conversation with his host.

Mr. Smith was a London man, and his sphere of knowledge was bounded by the metropolis. Mr. Howard was a country squire, and to him Clayshire was the world. County gossip, county politics, and sporting comprised the sum of his knowledge. His visitor was *au fait* at counting-house tittle-tattle, counting-house politics, and good dinners. If Mr. Howard spoke of a neighbour who was hard up, Mr. Smith could tell of a great house that was shaky. If Mr. Howard introduced the price of corn and cattle, Mr. Smith quoted Mark Lane and Smithfield ; but as neither party knew anything as to what the other was talking about, they did not succeed in entertaining each other. Mr. Smith tried politics—his host immediately d—d the Free-traders, and that subject was abandoned. At this

juncture the former remembered that he had once seen a meet of the Brighton harriers, and a congenial topic being thus started, the entertained and entertainer became the best of friends before Kate rose to leave the gentlemen to their wine, though why the fair sex should object to seeing men take too much, and yet condescend to speak to them afterwards in the drawing-room, is one of those anomalies which is not easily explained.

"You will be glad to hear, sir," said Levinge, addressing his uncle, "that we have reached the coal, landed some, and shall commence to smelt in a month."

"Well done," said Mr. Howard; "I heartily congratulate you."

"It is a great pity for Clayshire," said Mr. Smith—"I make the observation with all due deference—notwithstanding, I reiterate my assertion, that it is a great pity that the gentry, Mr. Howard, do not develop the mineral resources of their properties, as my friend here is doing."

Mr. Howard bore the observation without wincing, although it always provoked him to hear a stranger criticising the county people of Clayshire.

"That remains to be proved," he replied; "Mr. Levinge must not cry 'whoop' till he's out of the wood."

Levinge smiled. "You must have faith and wait, sir, and then you will acknowledge how much wiser it is to get a return of from ten to fifteen per cent. than to be content with three, which I am sure is as much as your land returns by way of interest for the capital it represents."

"You are so full of interest and per-centage, that I fancy you must have borrowed a clerk's brains," replied the host.

"At any rate," said Levinge, "you will admit that it is a far more philanthropic idea to employ a thousand labourers at good wages than to give up the hills to foxes and woodcocks."

"D—n your philanthropy!" said the squire, with a laugh; "but little of the mantle of John Howard rests on you."

Levinge looked half angry, but thought it best to smile. "Take another view of the question, then," said he; "if you had your choice between two and a half or five per cent., which would you prefer?"

"Which would I like best, Eclipse or a cart stallion, I suppose you would ask?"

"Just so," said Levinge; "I see we are agreed; we both prefer the racer, even though he may run away with us."

Smith, who had been an attentive listener, now broke in. "My experience, sir, convinces me that all men are pretty much alike in wishing to increase their rent-roll. Some use questionable, some illegitimate, and some lawful ways to accomplish this end; but every one is prepared to do so, only show him how. I have had a good deal of experience in London business life, and really the number of persons whom I know who have begun life with nothing but a small capital, and are now men of fortune, is perfectly surprising."

"And how many have gone to the dogs in the same time?" said the squire.

"Far less, sir, than you suppose. I am prepared to prove that the number of those who succeed in life infinitely surpasses that of those who fail. The fact is, a million men may rise from the ranks and die the possessors of respectable fortunes, but nobody hears of them, their history is never written, their progress is never marked except in the aggregate ; and if the wealth of England was not known to be steadily increasing by statistical returns, the fact that such men live would be unnoticed. If we hear of a horrid murder the tidings ring through the land, and half the old women are nightly in terror as soon as the sun sets. The press teems with reports and leading articles, and all religion groans in horror ; but if ten thousand just men die, not a word is said. So it is in business ; half-a-dozen great failures make the hair of every merchant stand on end, while they never think of taking comfort from the fact of the thousands whose credit is unshaken."

"I admit there is some truth in what you say. Help yourself to wine, sir."

Mr. Smith refreshed himself, and resumed. "Some truth, sir, did you say ? My observations are the unqualified truth, sir ; furthermore, sir, this same nervous dread of failure operates most prejudicially to the interests of the country. Look at the countless millions locked up in land at three per cent., all of which could be doubled ; calculate the huge sums of money that wealthy men, landed proprietors like yourself, have lying idle at their bankers', all of which ought to be employed, all of which could be made to return six,

twelve, and twenty per cent.—I speak far within bounds—if judiciously invested.”

“In what way, sir?” asked the squire.

“In many ways, sir; mines, factories, Indian irrigation, steam-shipping, and so forth.”

“But,” said Mr. Howard, “how are we country folks to obtain a knowledge of all or of one of these proposed schemes? What do persons like myself know of business?”

“That is precisely the question that I anticipated. I reply, there is no occasion that you should indulge in the drudgery of trade as long as the joint-stock principle can be availed of. All that is required of persons of your class is to look into the character of the servants you employ.”

“A most difficult task, by the way,” said Mr. Howard; “none more so.”

“I must again differ from you. The directorate is always open to investigation; travelling is both cheap and expeditious; figures are facts, and facts are stubborn things. Accounts consist of figures, and a knowledge of rudimentary arithmetic is all that is required to investigate them. For example, there is the great banking company of which I am the manager; more than one country gentleman, and two or three retired military and naval officers, are among our directors; and I am bound to confess that they are not to be surpassed, as men of business, by any of their coadjutors.”

“And what dividend does your bank declare?” said Mr. Howard.

"We have not been in existence two years yet, consequently our business is undeveloped ; nevertheless we paid eight per cent. last year, and our prospects are most flourishing. I make this communication in confidence, but the dividend this year will be twenty per cent. As I predicted from the first, we must succeed. The best proof I can give is, that I have invested twenty thousand pounds in shares, and would take more if I could induce the directors to allot me a greater number ; but the fact is, it is their duty to extend their connection, and, as a conscientious man, I cannot ask them to make a sacrifice to please me."

"I had no idea," said Levinge, "that their rules were so stringent."

"It is quite right that they should be," said the squire. "What number of shares are unappropriated, Mr. Smith?"

"The amount of our paid-up capital is £220,000, and that leaves £30,000 worth of shares unappropriated ; but the directors reserve to themselves the power of increasing the amount of capital as the business of the bank requires."

"What do you think of this concern, Edward?" said the squire.

"I can only tell you that I am a large shareholder, and that is, I suppose, the most satisfactory answer I can give you."

"Dear me," said Mr. Howard, "I have a great mind to take a few shares. What would you recommend?"

"If you ask my opinion," said Levinge, "I tell you frankly, I can see no objection to the course you propose."

"Who are your directors?"

Mr. Smith read the list, and added: "I hope, whenever there is a vacancy, that it will be filled by your nephew, sir."

A great deal of conversation followed, an immense amount of detail was entered into by the manager, and the whole scheme of the bank shown to be of the most practical nature; neither did it lose anything from the advocacy of Levinge. The wine circulated freely. Mr. Howard took more than his usual limited quantity, and though perfectly sober, he became a little excited, and finally proposed investing five thousand pounds.

"It is not my business," said Mr. Smith, "to advise you to increase your stake, because, as I have told you, it is the object of our board to place the bank on the widest possible basis, by multiplying the number of shareholders; not so much with a view to security, as to extend the business connection of the bank; but if you should wish to take a larger number of shares in three days from this, I will use whatever influence I possess to further your views."

"Tea is on table," said the footman, throwing open the door; and the party adjourned to the drawing-room.

Mr. Smith resumed his conversation with the squire, until the latter fell off into a comfortable doze. Levinge and his cousin meanwhile engaged in a *tête-à-tête*.

"How long," said Kate, "before your works will be in full operation?"

"A month hence, I expect," said Levinge.

"How many men have you employed?"

"Upwards of two hundred," was his reply.

"What responsibilities you have taken upon yourself!" said Kate.

"Yes," said Levinge, "but action is life to me. I am one of those persons who require to be ever employed. With me to rest is to rust."

"I do not only regard your responsibilities in a financial point of view. Have you not thought of the mental and moral well-being of all these men?" said Kate.

"Do you mean to ask," said Levinge, "if I have built a church, and endowed a school?"

"At least," said Kate, "have you made any arrangements for teaching the children, and providing religious instruction for the inhabitants of your village? The district is remote from every town, and if you do not move in the matter I fear your men will do you little credit."

"To speak candidly," replied Levinge, "I have not thought of the subject yet. I have accomplished so much in so short a space of time, that my attention has been engaged in other directions. But it will give me great pleasure to listen to your suggestions."

Kate, thus appealed to, hesitated at first. After a little reflection, she said: "Probably you may think that I am enthusiastic; however, I will give you my

notions freely. It appears to me that all large employers of labour have specific duties to perform in relation to those whom they employ. It is not sufficient that they should pay their workmen's wages punctually, just as a steam-engine is supplied with coal and water to enable it to perform its work ; but they should regard their men as fellow-beings, with as large a capacity for happiness as themselves, and having an equal stake in regard to the future. Possessed of capital, and, it is supposed, education also, the masters should avail themselves of their position to effect as much good as possible, in removing ignorance, encouraging good conduct, and promoting the knowledge of religion among their workmen. You, especially, have peculiar advantages in this respect, and, at the same time, graver responsibilities. You have brought together some hundreds of persons in a remote district ; you have, in a word, built and peopled a large village, and the moral and spiritual culture of the inhabitants should not be left to chance. I believe you should erect a large school, engage a schoolmaster, and the room could be used on Sundays as a place of worship."

"Probably you are not aware that nearly all the men at Lemford are dissenters ; and an episcopal clergyman would be an offence to them."

"I dare say you are right," said Kate, "but that does not militate against my plan. I care not to what denomination of Christians the people belong ; I am indifferent as to who are the preachers, provided that the grand truths of the Gospel are declared."

"You surely would not encourage dissenters?" said Levinge.

"Not so far as I am myself concerned, certainly," she replied. "But I would not deprive any one of the advantages of the public offices of religion, because his opinions differed from mine."

"You have forgotten," said Levinge, "that Dissenters are Radicals—that they are so opposed to the Church, that they would overthrow it if they could. The spirit that animated the Covenanters is not dead; and the shout of 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon' would again ring through the land should opportunity offer."

"I will not see religion through the haze of politics," said Kate; "the church alone is answerable for dissent; it is the natural offspring of her spiritual sloth and political tyranny. My doctrine is, that where there is freedom, there the religion suited to the place and people will spring up."

"Almost thou persuadest me to be—" began Levinge.

"Hush!" said Kate, "do not mock."

"Ah, Kate," said he, with a sigh, "you are a good woman; you are destined to make some fortunate person very happy."

Kate held down her head, and when she spoke again, it was with such apparent coldness that her cousin almost shivered, thinking to himself, "Incomprehensible girl! I fancied that I had only to ask and to have, and yet the nearer I approach the fainter appears my chance of success."

Levinge was, in reality, self-deceived. Whether it

was that the anxiety to obtain the prize blinded his usually keen perception, or that her innocence and purity were spread round his cousin as an ægis, he did not pause to consider. Well versed in all the arts of the sex, he had never had to deal with perfect simplicity, combined with unassumed maidenly reserve and bashfulness. He knew his cousin was not a coquette ; he knew that she had nothing to gain in accepting him ; and judging from her invariable candour and openness, he expected to see these traits manifested in her affections ; whenever he treated her as a cousin, she was always kind, and even affectionate ; but as a lover, although he flattered himself that she was not altogether indifferent to him, yet he could never assure himself that he was the man of her choice.

Kate rose from her seat, held out her hand, saying, "Good night, Edward," bowed to Mr. Smith, and left the room. Taking a bedroom candle from the marble table in the hall, she proceeded hurriedly to her bedroom, bolted the door, threw herself upon her knees by the bedside, and burst into tears. After a little time, she rose, opened the shutters, and threw wide the window. The moon was at its full, and the river at the foot of the park gleamed like a silver band girt round the meadows. An occasional "caw" from the rookery, and the shrill scream of an owl, alone broke the silence. The night air played upon her face, cooling her fevered brow, as, with one arm thrown round the stone shaft of the old Elizabethan casement, she stood gazing on the beauty of the night.

"How absurd," said she to herself, "to give way to my feelings in this manner! I think he cares for me; but whenever he seems about to say that which I should wish to hear, I instinctively repel him. I wonder do I really love him? He is not quite my *beau ideal*, but I must not expect perfection." A louder scream than that of the owl now startled her. It proceeded from two herons sailing over the river. This drew her attention to the water, and that led her to think of Eveleyn; for the stream into which she had plunged when out hunting was a tributary of the Colne, that flowed on its course before her. "Poor Eveleyn!" said she, half aloud; "though all the squirearchy of Clayshire rail at your Radicalism, yours is a noble soul notwithstanding."

The wind had changed, and a chill air came up from the valley that made her shiver. She closed the casement with a sigh, and proceeded to undress, without the assistance of her maid, who availed herself of the opportunity to flirt with the footman.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MODEL MAN.

A LITTLE more than a month had elapsed since the events narrated in the last chapter took place. In this interval coal had been raised at Lemford; the tramway to the canal was nearly complete; and the first furnace had been charged. To accomplish all this in less than the space of a year required no little energy on the part of the managers, and no small expenditure of capital, all of which had been furnished by the Cosmopolitan Bank, on the security of Levinge's paper. More than a hundred thousand pounds had been drawn out; and then it was suggested by Mr. Smith that it would be well if his partner were to join the directorate. There being no vacancy at the board, one of its members, a far-sighted man, made Levinge the offer to vacate his seat, provided he bought his shares, amounting to thirty thousand pounds. This offer was accepted, and Levinge having given his note of hand for the amount, the bank advanced the needful, and in exchange ob-

tained the important services, and secured to itself the valuable patronage of the owner of the Lemford iron work, who was thus able, without any difficulty, to direct the flow of coin into his own coffers.

It must not be imagined that Levinge at this time had any idea that the result of his projects might be unfavourable ; on the contrary, he was fully convinced of success ; otherwise he would have been the last person to persuade his intended father-in-law to become a shareholder. It is true that his connection with the bank was a onesided one. If he won, the bank only gained its ordinary and legitimate profits ; if the other alternative occurred, he had nothing to lose. This view of the question did not disturb his slumbers ; trifles of this kind were beneath his consideration. Iron sold well ; the great iron-masters were known to be making fortunes ; his property abounded in minerals—why should he not bring them into the market ? Why should he not develop the resources of the estate, and wipe off every debt ? Narrow-minded people might have suggested prudence and economy. He was superior to such petty advice, applicable enough to hucksters, but not to E. Levinge, Esq., M.P., &c. &c.

It was, as we have said, about a month after his late visit to Castle Croft that he wrote :—

“ Haughton Hall.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ On Tuesday next we shall tap our first furnace. If you and my cousin will do me the favour to witness this, the real commencement of our operations at Lemford, I will drive

over to the Croft on Monday night, and we can go on together next morning.

“Ever, my dear Sir,

“Most sincerely yours,

“FRANK HOWARD, Esq.,

“E. LEVINGE.

“Castle Croft.”

An affirmative reply having been received, Levinge found himself, on the appointed evening, at his uncle's. After an early breakfast, they started in the barouche for Lemford; and as they drew near the works, they saw that preparations had been made for a gala day. A large triumphal arch was erected between the main rows of cottages, flags were hung out from the windows of the manager's house, and more than one banner proudly floated from its staff, that projected from the angles of the front of the furnace.

As many of the men as were not actually engaged in that morning's work were dressed in their Sunday clothes, and the wives and children also appeared in holiday array; a smiling aspect pervaded the whole scene. The air was soft, without being too hot; and the sun shone merrily on the hills around, and on the meadows by the stream.

Immense cheering greeted the arrival of the carriage. Hats were frantically waved; the loud “hurrahs” echoed through the valley; and the ravens on the hill-tops croaked in chorus as if they mistook the tumult for a battle.

No sooner did the horses pass the arch than they were immediately unharnessed, and a tribe of colliers and miners pulled the barouche at the top of their

speed, until they stopped breathless at the gate of the manager's house. Here Mr. Jones was in readiness to receive them, and was introduced with all due form to the visitors.

"Will you not come in and sit down?" said Mr. Jones; "we shall not tap the furnace for an hour."

"I think I should prefer to walk about," said Kate.

So the whole party proceeded to inspect the works. The second furnace, which had only been completed during the week, and the third one, which was being built, enabled Mr. Jones to explain the practice of smelting the ore thoroughly. Then the colliery was visited, and the steam-engine examined. Neither was Kate's mind so completely taken up with the examination of the works that she failed to remark on the beauty of the scenery, and asked her cousin, half laughingly, how he could consent to mar such loveliness? "Only fancy," said she, "all these trees cut down, these glorious woods destroyed, the surface of the hills excoriated with the pickaxe, and their green hue exchanged for a garment of black rubbish; while the echo from the waterfall will be hushed in the roar of steam hammers, and that pure, bright stream converted into a noisome ditch."

Before Levinge had time to reply, a messenger came up running, to inform them that the time for tapping the furnace had arrived. Thither they hurried.

The furnace was a huge square building about forty feet wide and sixty in height, constructed in the strongest manner, of hewn stone, and tied together at the angles

with iron braces, to give it additional strength. In the centre of the front side there was a large arch, as it were, hollowed out of the mass, and in the middle was the furnace door, technically called the "plug." The ground beneath it, and for some distance on each side, and also outwards, was covered with fine sand, divided into a series of moulds, which formed the receptacles for the fluid metal, and were so arranged that when one was charged the molten stream flowed into another, and so on, until all were filled. At the command of the manager the plug was knocked away, and out poured the glowing flood, running like water along the channels destined to receive it. One by one each bed was filled gently and noiselessly, the stream becoming slower and slower as it reached the borders of the sand and began to cool. Although it was day, the effect of the intense light was very beautiful; but, as Jones very justly remarked, you should see the tapping during night-time, when the metal comes out in a brilliant pale orange tint, deepening to red and purple as it grows colder, the men in the red light looking like salamanders (an animal, by-the-way, about as rare as an honest agent). One by one the tints in the metal changed, like the dying hues of the dolphin, until at length the blue-black bars of pig-iron lay in their shapeless ugliness side by side in the sand, there to remain till the morrow, when they would be piled up ready to be shipped in the new barges lying sleepily at the end of the tramway.

The operation being concluded, the visitors returned

to lunch at Mr. Jones's, eagerly discussing the subjects incidental to the occasion, while Levinge felt like a man who had discovered a gold mine in his kitchen-garden, the auriferous contents of which he would be enabled to transfer to his strong chests without even the necessity of paying the gardener to help him.

The work of inspection had not been completed, and after they had partaken of refreshment, under the guidance of the owner the party recommenced their explorations. At one end of the cottages a large store had been built, and from the flags and festoons that decorated the exterior, as well as the sounds of festivity within, it was evident that no unimportant part of the drama was being played out inside.

Entering by a small door at one end, the key of which Jones took from his pocket, they found themselves at the bottom of a platform railed off from the space below, and decorated in the floral style.

The moment that Levinge's hat appeared just above the screen placed in front of the stairs that led up to the seats of honour, a furious cheer rang through the building, which was renewed again and again as Kate, her father, and her cousin rose into view.

Levinge remarked a flash of pleasure in the young lady's eye, as, with heightened colour, she gazed on the hundreds of men and women assembled at the lately well-spread tables, which now bore evidence of having been savagely attacked. There was no originality in the scene, although to her it was new. There was the general abundance of roast beef and

plum pudding, and superabundance of beer. The everlasting laurel-leaves and pink and white rosettes were stuck here and there over the roof and walls of the building, and fell from the beams in as graceless festoons as could be devised by native taste.

The guests were the colliers, miners, &c., and were as interesting to the eye as such masses of humanity generally are. All, more or less, exhibited a taste for red or bright-coloured neck-ties and flashy waistcoats; all displayed the same objection to clean hands and thoroughly purified faces; all bore the stamp of physical energy, and he who looked a little deeper might have easily discovered the dogged determination and air of independence which every now and then finds its expression in a strike, when minerals are scarce and stocks of metals are exhausted. Their wives and sweet-hearts also in no small proportion were present, radiant in holiday costume, many of the latter bright-eyed, laughing girls, looking forward with pleasing anticipation to the day when they should enter the state of wedlock, dress slovenly, and get a front tooth or two knocked out, to ensure a sober, matronly appearance.

The scene wore a very different aspect to Kate Howard. To her it was an earnest of that unity of feeling which Utopians suppose to subsist between master and man. It was also an indication of that goodness of heart which she always persuaded herself her cousin really possessed. Moreover, it was a proof of his energy and genius, that in the space of less than a year he should have designed and carried out a

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scheme so comprehensive and so bold, resulting in the crowded assembly of jovial and enthusiastic artisans, whose debt of gratitude to her relative she felt must be unbounded.

"By —! Edward," said the squire, "you are a wonderful fellow; but I'd rather feed a dozen kennels of foxhounds than your pack of men."

"But this scene won't be of every-day occurrence," said Levinge.

"You're mistaken, my boy," replied the squire. "These fellows will feed every day at your expense."

"Yes," said Kate, turning round, her cheek still flushed. "But is it not a glorious thought, papa, that one man is capable of rendering such important service to so many of his fellow-men?"

"Tut, tut, my dear," said her father, "you're too good for this world; and it's all because you have given up hunting."

It will not interest the reader if we repeat Levinge's speech, duly prepared beforehand, and replete with the usual platitudes. Suffice it to say that he acquitted himself to his own satisfaction, although his audience imperfectly heard his observations, and failed to understand those that reached them.

The speech being concluded, there was a bustle at the far end of the room, and presently Mr Jones, who had vanished from the platform, made his appearance at the head of a dozen of the leading hands, carrying a parchment roll. Approaching the front of the platform, he proceeded to read the address, for such it

proved to be; and finally depositing the vellum roll in a handsomely-carved oak box, he presented it to Levinge, who was really taken by surprise, and exceedingly pleased at the unexpected attention; which, of course, called forth a warm expression of his satisfaction and pleasure in receiving it, and his assurance that it was the proudest and happiest moment of his life.

"It is time to return," said the squire, as they left the room.

"I must beg half an hour's grace," said Levinge. "I have not shown you all my arrangements."

"What have we got to see?" asked Kate.

"The school-room," was the reply.

A few minutes' walk brought them to an oblong building, perfectly plain and unpretending; the interior well lighted and ventilated, and furnished with desks and forms. The master was in attendance, who conducted them to the class-room, the walls of which were well covered with an admirable selection of books.

"We have forty scholars," said the master, "and the number is regularly increasing; to-morrow evening is our tea-party."

"It occurred to me," said Levinge, "that, as the fathers and mothers have their feast, it would be only fair to give the children a treat."

"How kind and thoughtful," said Kate; "nothing seems to have been forgotten on your part."

"I cannot take any of the credit to myself," said Levinge.

"I do not understand you," said Kate.

"The explanation is very simple," replied her cousin.
"I have only carried out the suggestion of another."

"Whose suggestion, may I ask?"

"Yours," was the answer.

Kate blushed; it was the most perfect compliment she had ever received.

The day's work was finished; the horses were harnessed. "Come, let us be off," said the squire.

What a pleasant drive home it was! The sun danced on the river, the shadows of the clouds sailed over the woods and hills, and the scent of the honeysuckle and wild rose perfumed the air with sweetness. Levinge was in high spirits, he talked incessantly. He discussed his plans; he drew attention to the fine points in the scenery as they rattled along; how earnest, how gay! Kate listened enrapt, and her father was almost carried away by his nephew's enthusiasm.

They dined alone that evening, and while the gentlemen were at their wine, the huntsman came in to say that the black mare, a great favourite of the squire's, was seized with inflammation. Mr. Howard at once rushed to the stables, and Levinge, left to himself, soon sought his cousin's society.

As he entered the drawing-room, Kate was sitting with a book lying open on her lap; it was evident that its contents did not interest her much, and so absorbed was she in reverie, that she did not perceive her cousin's entrance until he stood before her, when she started, exclaiming—

"Oh, is it you! where's papa?"

"The black mare is ill, and he is paying her a visit."

"Poor Violet!" said Kate; "I am so sorry."

"Do you ever wish," said Levinge, scarcely heeding her remark, "to have the power to read the thoughts of others?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I should like to have known what you were thinking of as I entered the room."

"So you would be a spy," said Kate.

"That is a harsh term to apply to any person whose interest in you would cause him to wish to know all of you that could be known."

"From a motive of curiosity?"

"Nay, nay," said Levinge, "from pure regard."

Kate smiled, and added—"Probably you would be happier in your ignorance."

Levinge placed a chair near his cousin, and sat down.

"So you were pleased Kate," said he, "with my arrangements at Lemford?"

"Not only pleased, but delighted," was her reply.

After exchanging one or two sentences, the conversation flagged, and for the first time in their lives, when together, both felt painfully embarrassed. Though a man of the world, and well up in all the methods of laying siege to the heart of woman, Levinge experienced a degree of diffidence and hesitation that he had never known before. He had always been on such close terms of intimacy with his cousin, that he could not determine whether she entertained any warmer feeling than would be warranted by the natural tie of

kinship. Add to this, his anxiety to obtain her in marriage, his dread of refusal, and it will be easily understood how this uncertainty rendered his manner constrained.

Kate also had been reflecting on various incidents which, taken singly, had little weight, but, as forming links in a chain of evidence, contributed to confirm the idea that Levinge entertained other feelings for her than those of a relation.

"I will go to the piano and sing," said Kate to herself; but she had not sufficient resolution to leave her seat.

"I will cut the Gordian knot," resolved Levinge, and yet he knew not how to commence.

"I have been thinking," said Kate, "that you ought to have a house near your works. I do not know what sort of man your manager is, but it appears to me that you are completely in his power."

"I quite agree with you," replied Levinge, "and I have already set apart a suite of rooms for myself in his house. Indeed, I sometimes think I have assumed a heavier burden of care than I can sustain; and yet, if I had to live over the past year again, I would do precisely as I have done in respect to my Lemford projects; provided the hope I have always cherished is not denied me—a hope which has been the aim of years, and the fulfilment of which depends upon one person. Need I tell you what that hope is, or that that person is yourself?"

"Edward!"

“Kate, I love you! Will you be my wife?”

There was no answer.

“Have you not felt,” he resumed, “how you have influenced me? If there be anything that is good in me, to you I owe it. If I have accomplished anything that is worthy of commendation, it has been by carrying out your suggestions. Kate, do not throw me off. You can make life paradise for me, and lead me in the path of all that is true and noble! Will you help me? There is a glorious prospect of usefulness and honest ambition opening before me, but I dare not contemplate the alternative if now all that I have truly lived for is destroyed!”

He drew his chair still closer, he took her hand in his, he bent forward, their lips met, and a kiss sealed her confession!

CHAPTER XIX.

A GLIMPSE BEYOND.

It was late when Levinge retired to rest ; he closed his eyes, but sleep would not come ; a tumult of thoughts rushed through his brain, a thousand fancies flitted before his imagination, and one pale and reproachful figure rose and looked wildly at him. Pictures of strange scenes presented themselves, unthought-of possibilities occurred, and after tossing on his bed for hours, he at last dropped off into a broken slumber, haunted with hideous dreams.

He fancied that he had been for years struggling through a wilderness, the paths of which had hitherto confounded him by their labyrinthine turnings. At last a globe of pale light appeared before him, which he followed as it retreated. Pursuing his luminous guide, that led him through ravines, over huge rocks, and even down precipices, which he was enabled to descend without hesitation, it at length brought him to the summit of a mountain, and there paused. Having gained the



highest point of the eminence, a strange prospect opened before him.

He saw that the wilderness through which he had been travelling still surrounded him on every side, but from the height on which he stood he could look beyond its farthest expanse; for the globe of light had expanded, and hung like a sun over the scene, distributing its beams to the farthest edge of the horizon, rendering every object within the area of vision perfectly clear and distinct. On the farthest verge of the wilderness before him commenced a region unlike anything he had seen before. A luminous atmosphere spread beneath the sky, like a bright aurora borealis, flashing in streams of light, varied with cloud-like forms of fantastic beauty. Gorgeous palaces occupied the foreground, from which, and into which, crowds of revellers were passing, while wondrous music resounded from the halls. Temples of grand proportions rose on either side, dedicated to the senses symbolized as gods. Senate houses, too, were there, devoted to questions of philosophy and science. All were full, devotees and philosophers jostled each other in the street, and lovely women abounded everywhere, who divided the attention of the gravest, and absorbed the whole thought of the young. From the style of the buildings, and conduct of the inhabitants, it was evident that the city was the abode of the votaries of passion and intellectual supremacy, where the mental and animal life alone reigned, but where spiritual existence was unknown. Suddenly there was a great cry, and a dense robe of blackness enveloped

the city, and this dark mantle, resolving itself into a more definite form, by degrees assumed the shape of a terrific fiend of gigantic proportions, the shadow from whose hand alone obscured the light.

The cry rose into a tumult. The demon lifted his palm, and the light streamed in upon the doomed people on whom the curse of raving madness had fallen. The young and old, the men and beautiful maidens were all armed, either for their own destruction or for that of their fellows. Some brandished knives, others swords or spears; some had only staves; but murder and suicide alone occupied their thoughts. Mothers and children threw themselves from the windows into the streets, others jumped savagely down on the heads of the crowd beneath. The pavement was slippery with gore, the gutters were glutted with blood, the streets were heaped with corpses, over whom frantic men drove their chariots, while their horses, possessed by like fury, tore with their teeth all whom they could snatch at as they passed. The carnage lasted for a space equivalent to a day, when death reigned triumphant in the city. There being no one to bury the dead, they festered as they lay, and noisome exhalations rising from the mass, gave birth to hideous forms of disease, that assumed countless bodily but unearthly shapes. These the demon gathered into his hand, and scattered over the face of the earth, to beget new horrors wherever they came.

Another sound arose; it was the voice of an earthquake. The ground opened beneath the city, and al

the stately edifices rolled into the chasm, from which bright flames ascended, and presently a fiery fountain burst forth. The molten spring continued to well up, until it spread over the whole plain on which the city had stood, and at length a sea of fire flowed everywhere, growing wider and wider each moment, until at one side it took the form of an enormous river, and rolled with inconceivable fury away into the farthest regions of space. The fiend flung himself into the torrent, and was carried with it into the unknown limits beyond, away! away! away! till his dread presence sank beneath the horizon's edge.

The spectator shuddered.

Turning, another country of an entirely different aspect met his view; the scenery was not remarkable for striking features—it was a land of meadows and corn fields, dotted with villages, and here and there a church. Its surface was gently undulating, and sloped downwards, on the south, to the shores of an inland sea, whose calm blue waters broke in a silver line along the beach. In the distance there were two or three islands, and various fishing boats moved backwards and forwards across the fiord. The inhabitants were men evidently accustomed to labour, to whom the brightness and beauty of the summer were only a compensation for the winter storms. An air of peace and rest pervaded the whole scene, there was an entire absence of excitement, and if the people were not rich, they at least were preserved from want. Then arose a delicious sound, very low, but exquisitely sweet. It was the

voice of prayer made audible, as it was wafted upward to the pearl gates. It rose and fell, then rose louder, until a burst of harmony resounded through the ethereal realms, for the spheres caught up and echoed back the hymn of the hierarchs, as they mingled their adoration with the sound of praise ascending from the worshippers on earth.

A strange thrill shot through the listener's heart, and he awoke.

By many a silver link of holy thought the angels try to draw souls back from hell. By signs and portents, dreams and admonitions, do they interpose between men and their doom. Full many a fancy laughed at as weakness in an angelic whisper. "Blessed is he who hears and understands."

Levinge tossed on his bed. "What is the hour?" thought he, and stretched out his hand to reach his repeater, but before he touched the spring, the clock on the landing struck two.

"Only two!" said he to himself; "I fancied I had been hours asleep."

A crisis in his fate was now approaching. He had plunged into a whirlpool, and believed he had strength to swim through. Intensely selfish, he had only considered what he supposed to be his own interest, nor had he scrupled in idea to sacrifice Zizzi to his wishes; and now that he had pledged himself to his cousin, it was evident that the time for action had arrived. Necessarily he must betray one, in fact, he had already done so, the only difficulty that troubled him was

how to accomplish his end in the most successful manner.

"I ought (thought he) to have got rid of Zizzi before this; it was very absurd to have kept her so long. But then I really liked her." He positively sighed.

Long he debated in his own mind how he should manage this part of the affair; sometimes he thought he would make her his confidant, in the belief that her attachment for him was so strong, that she would be induced to sacrifice herself for his pecuniary benefit. "If," said he to himself, "I could convince her that my salvation depended upon this match, I think she would not thwart me."

On the other hand, he considered that a loving woman will sacrifice anything for the object of her affections, except her love. Wealth, fame, position, might weigh as dust in the balance, even life might be yielded up—but not her place in the heart of her beloved. After revolving numerous plans, he considered the best would be to bring her back to her native Syra. There her family still lived; they were poor—money would accomplish the rest.

The scheme resolved upon, he breathed freer; already in imagination he saw every difficulty set at rest, and a future of respectability opening before him. He consoled himself with the idea that all men sow their wild oats, and settled down into quiet fathers of families, chairmen of missionary societies, and the like. Why should he not do likewise? The very idea made him feel religious; all vexatious thoughts were quieted, he

turned on his side and slept the sleep of the virtuous, and on this occasion was not troubled with indigestion.

Not even the ardour of his affection for Kate, or her gentle glances, could avail to cause him to stay longer than lunch time, so anxious was he to put his household in order without delay.

CHAPTER XX.

OVER THE SEA.

IN the same room in St. John's Wood which we have visited before, the following evening after Levinge had left the Croft, Zizzi stood looking out through the window.

"Here he comes!" she exclaimed, her eyes sparkling with delight. She rushed to open the hall door, and as her lord and master entered, she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him again and again.

"Oh, it is so good of you to hasten your return from the country," said Zizzi.

Levinge seated himself on a couch, and Zizzi perched on his lap, smoothed his forehead with her soft white hand, and nestled like a little bird in his bosom.

"Why are you so silent, Edward?" said she. "Are you very tired?"

"No, dear, not at all."

"I am sure there is something the matter; you do not look like yourself," said Zizzi.

"I am the bearer of bad news, darling," Levinge replied bluntly.

"Bad news!" exclaimed Zizzi, starting up, and her eyes dilating. "Of whom? for whom?"

Levinge took a letter from his pocket. "It was addressed to me," he said, "although its contents are meant for you,"

Zizzi opened the missive, but her agitation was so great she could not read it. "Tell me," she exclaimed, "tell me, Edward, what it means."

"Your father—" he began.

"Is dead!" she cried.

"No, dear, not dead; but ill, very ill."

"Oh, take me to him, take me to him, Edward, if you love me!"

"But the distance, Zizzi?"

"Oh, never mind the distance. Take me to him, Edward"—and the tears streamed down the poor creature's face. "Oh, Edward, will you take me to him?" And she interlaced her fingers, and looked up at him imploringly.

"Yes, I will take you," said he, bending down and kissing her.

"To-night, Edward, to-night?"

"No, dear, not to-night. We shall gain nothing by that. We cannot catch the steamboat to-night."

Zizzi immediately commenced making preparations for her journey, and the occupation served in some measure to divert her thoughts; but this duty accomplished, a re-action set in, and Levinge had no little

difficulty in soothing her. She was up and dressed with the daylight, and in a mad fever until they set out to the railway station an hour before the time, a piece of extravagance which Levinge could not prevent. Attended by his confidential valet they travelled night and day until they reached Marseilles, when they found they would have to wait four days for the steamer.

Here, however, Levinge had determined that the journey should terminate for him.

The morning after he arrived, he had an interview with his valet.

"Withers," said Levinge.

"Sir," said the servant.

"You have known me several years."

"Nine, your honor."

"I thought so," said Levinge; who added, "and you have found me a liberal paymaster."

"I have, sir."

"I am going to place great confidence in you. Are you prepared to carry out my orders?"

"Unto death, sir," replied Withers, "if necessary."

"Listen then," said his master. "Business obliges me to return to England, and therefore Madame Deduci will continue her journey under your escort. She is going to the Island of Syra, off the coast of Greece, where her father resides, whom she believes to be dying. This is not the case, but to see him is the motive of her journey; once there, I wish her to remain, you understand me; on no account must the lady return to England. When she arrives at Syra, she will probably

have her suspicions at once aroused, as soon as she finds the story of her father's illness to be a fabrication. You must guard against this, if possible, or, at any rate, you must postpone the explanation as long as it is practicable; when, however, it cannot be deferred, hand her this letter—it is to say that she can never return. It will be your duty to make friends with her father, who is a fisherman or master of a small coaster, and who for money would sell a hundred daughters if he had them. Give him a sum equivalent to fifty pounds at once; say a like amount shall be paid at the expiration of a month if his daughter remains on the island, and that I will settle on her annually a pension equivalent to fifty pounds sterling as long as she lives with him. You afterwards must remain at Syra until you hear from me, taking especial care that the lady does not make her escape, for she is capable of anything of the kind. You will go by steamer from this to Athens, and thence to Syra as you can; probably you will be obliged to hire a small craft for the purpose. Here are two hundred pounds in gold, and a letter of credit on a house in Syra for as much more. I shall hear from you before this money is exhausted. Now for your own reward. If you conduct this business to my satisfaction, I will give you on your return to England three years' wages; and further, I will renew your father's lease on his farm at the present rent for twenty-one years. Does this offer satisfy you?"

"Perfectly, sir," said Withers.

"One charge more, and this is as important as any,

and as you value my favour, treat the lady with every possible respect. Be sure that you fail not in this, and I warn you that I have means, which I can rely on, of ascertaining how you conduct yourself."

"You can trust me, sir," said Withers.

"Do you understand my directions?"

"Perfectly, sir. But you will oblige me by writing down the amount of money to be given, and the name of the lady's father."

"It is Andrea Deduci," said Levinge, at the same time adopting the suggestion of his servant. "I also," said he, "give you discretionary power to increase the amount of my gifts to the father."

The next morning Levinge came in to their apartments at the hotel, looking very grave. "I have just received a letter from England," said he, "which renders my return indispensable."

"Oh never, Edward!" exclaimed Zizzi. "Oh, for my sake, do give up this horrid business for ever."

"Impossible, dearest," was his answer.

"What shall I do?" said Zizzi. "I cannot let my father die, and I cannot travel alone!"

"Of course not," said Levinge; "but you can take Withers with you, and he can be depended on."

"Oh, but then I shall leave you," said Zizzi, the tears full in her eyes. "Oh, it will kill me! kill me! My heart is torn in pieces, I shall die!" She flung herself on the ground in a paroxysm of grief.

Levinge raised her gently, and bore her to the balcony. "Zizzi," said he, in his softest tone, "you must

not give way in this manner. I would do very differently for you if I could, but my hands are tied."

"If I go with Withers, will you follow quickly and bring me back?"

"How quickly do you mean?" said Levinge.

"Oh, a week or nine days at furthest."

"But would you not like to stay a little while on the island, when you are there, to see your friends and relatives?"

"No! no! not a day if you are not there. What are friends to me? Even my father, whom I so love, does not care for me, and my brothers are at sea! Oh come, Edward; promise to join me there, and then we will realise that lovely dream I told you of last year in London. Say you will come!"

"Anything to please you," said Levinge, kissing her, for, fearing that she might forego her intention altogether, he would have made a dozen promises rather than she should return to England with him.

The next morning Zizzi and Withers embarked, her eyes red with weeping.

Levinge brought her to her berth, saw that every arrangement was made for her comfort, and then bade her good-bye, in the most affectionate manner. Giving Withers a few parting instructions, he went on shore, and started for England immediately.

CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. AYLMER'S STORY.

If old Mr. Evelyn had a fault, it was an invincible repugnance to part with his children. Eveleyn, as we have seen, had been educated in the neighbourhood of Bricklinton; Lilla had never been out of the town for educational purposes, neither had her younger brothers.

Eveleyn in his own case had found the disadvantage of this method, and was resolved to influence his father to treat Robert and George differently. For some months past he had been urging the necessity of giving the former a profession, and sending the latter to a large school, where the mental attrition between the different characters of the boys effects such wondrous changes, and especially assists in forming habits of self-reliance in those gentle and probably effeminate natures which some boys possess, and of which George was an example.

It was no easy matter to break down the barrier of

prejudice which hemmed in the old gentleman's mind. He used to say, "I do not like placing my boys where they will no longer be under my control. The world is so wicked, and the human heart is so prone to evil, I dread the consequences of sending them from under my eye. Of what gain hereafter will it be to them, if they obtain knowledge at the expense of virtue?—and even if they do not become wicked themselves, they will by contact with vice have the fine susceptibilities of their moral sense deadened. I cannot—I cannot let them go—I shall not be fulfilling my parental trust if I do."

Eveleyn, on the other hand, used to reply—"My dear father, you forget that the boys will not always remain boys; they will be men in a few years, acting, thinking, responsible men. The age of tutelage must pass, and will it not be better to prepare them for the subsequent battle of life as much as possible? You cannot preserve them from the knowledge of evil, it abounds within and without; neither are you responsible for its existence; and if you by precept and practice endeavour to prevent your children from participating in the wickedness of the world, you will have performed, as, indeed, you have performed, all that is incumbent on you."

"Ah, Eveleyn, yours is a worldly argument," his father would answer, shaking his head. "But only consider what millions of souls have been led to traverse the broad road entirely in consequence of bad example. Those children who are removed by parental

care from this pernicious influence, may have incitements to sin, which they dread to commit lest they should become monsters of iniquity ; but when, by mixing with the frivolous and the wicked, they learn that the offences they shun are laughed at by the unscrupulous, they, too, follow in the path of destruction, which they probably would never have entered upon but for the encouragement of sinners."

"I grant you, my dear father," Eveleyn would rejoin, "that experience teaches us that more evil is practised than virtue. But as we must accept the world as it is, the question for our consideration is, whether ignorance or knowledge is the most reliable safeguard ? Far greater is his merit who overcomes the world with which he is in actual contact, than he who holds on his even way, untouched by temptation as it assails the wayfarer in life's journey at every turn. Besides, it must be remembered that seclusion from the world is no absolute security—your sinful thoughts will find expression, and what are termed our minor sins are sufficient to condemn us ; moreover it appears to me to be something akin to distrust in the sufficiency of God's grace, if we adopt the spirit and practice of monasticism. It is said that we are never tempted above our powers of resistance, therefore my maxim would be 'Trust in God, and fear not.'"

Many were the arguments they had on this subject, and at last, though half doubtingly, the old gentleman yielded. So Bob was apprenticed to Doctor Fellows, and George was placed in a London merchant's office.

It was a hard struggle for the father to part with

his youngest son ; many were the injunctions he gave, and many were the secret prayers offered up for his safety. After a little time the blank at the table was less noticed, and the family became reconciled to the change, though often, when no one remarked it, Mr. Evelyn would turn a wistful glance to the place where his little boy used to sit ; it was the first diminution in the numbers of the household since his wife had passed away.

Lilla was rapidly budding into womanhood, and grew lovelier every day ; Eveleyn could not help confessing to himself how beautiful she was, and he was not sufficiently egotistical to believe that his friend Jack Hilton's visits were entirely on his account.

Mrs. Aylmer's acquaintance, at least in a worldly point of view, had been an advantage to her ; she had improved her style in every way. She dressed better, walked better, played with greater correctness, and had acquired more manner, without losing a particle of her sweetness or amiability.

What Mrs. Aylmer's motives were in taking such pains with her young friend, he did not pause to inquire.

Some of the pious Mr. Rubric's communicants shook their heads, and cried shameful. Miss McCatty remarked, that she had never seen in her life a woman make such a fool of herself as Mrs. Aylmer. " But then (she was talking to Mrs. Davis), my dear, these widows bewitched are not to be trusted ; as my dear father, the Canon used to say, ' they are as treacherous as old black breeches, and require to be treated in society with

the greatest care, because of their fragility.' It would not have been so bad," the good lady continued, "if she ran after gentlemen, but to take a fancy to such an upstart as young Evelyn is outrageous." But whenever she met Mrs. Aylmer in the street, no one could greet her more cordially, or inquire more affectionately after her health. "It won't do to cut her," Miss McCatty used to say to herself, "as long as her relations speak to her."

None are so virtuous as those who are removed from all possibility of falling. The beauty of purity is never fully appreciated, especially by ladies, until they are descending into the shadow of the second half century. No wives are so chaste in feeling, and intolerant of laxity, as those whom nature has forbidden to be tempted. Even a sybarite must practise frugality in a gaol, and an Alexander Selkirk would have found some difficulty in erring.

Look at that poor wretch arraigned as a felon—forgery his offence. Had he been born possessed of the wealth of him who prosecutes him, and had he, the rich banker, been the half-starved clerk, each might have played out the other's part in the drama.

Walk down the narrow street, enter that humble lodging—there, in the dingy room, lies the wreck of what was once a handsome gentleman. What were his sins?—Poverty and pride. He dared not ask the girl to marry him whom he loved; she was the child of rich parents—he could not humiliate himself so as to become a pensioner on his wife's bounty. She cannot wait for him till he has made a fortune and a name—

that would be romantic folly. He cannot love another, and finds solace at the billiard table and the inn bar. She drives her carriage and pair in the park ; he dies at thirty-five, in a city lodging.

O weary old world ! Those to whom thou art best known should judge thy victims leniently. Thank God ! at the last assize there will be justice.

"Eveleyn," said Lilla, looking up from a piece of music which she had been transcribing, "will you do me a favour ?"

"What is it ?" said her brother, rather uncourtously.

"Take this song to Mrs. Aylmer, as you go to the reading-room."

"How do you know I am going to the reading-room ?"

"Because you generally do. Come," said she, smiling, "be a good boy, and do as I ask you."

"Very well," said Eveleyn.

So she rolled up the manuscript and gave it to him.

Of course he only intended leaving the song at the door, yet he took the precaution to change his coat and brush his hair ; and having finished these little alterations in his toilet, he sauntered down the street, walking on the pavement on the opposite side to Mrs. Aylmer's residence. As he approached he very naturally looked up at the window, where sat the lady of the house. She did not beckon or make any sign, yet the mere fact of seeing her caused Eveleyn to change his intention, and knocking at the door, he asked if Mrs. Aylmer

was at home, and immediately after found himself in her presence.

"I have brought you a piece of music at my sister's request."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Aylmer; adding, half in jest, half in earnest, "and therefore I am not indebted to yourself for the honour of this visit."

"Mrs. Aylmer!"

"Mr. Eveleyn!"

"You are too severe," said the latter; "the difficulty is to resist the attractions of your house."

"Hush! hush!" said the lady; "we have known each other long enough to speak the truth without affectation. Whatever be the motive, I am at any rate glad to see you. Do sit down, now;" and seeing Eveleyn still undecided, "do not stand with your hat in your hand like an undertaker. Be sociable for once."

Eveleyn did not need much persuasion to induce him to stay, so he threw himself into an arm-chair, and Mrs. Aylmer took her seat on the couch.

"I have been thinking about you to-day," said the latter.

"Have you?" said Eveleyn.

"You seem to take it as a matter of course," observed the lady, smiling. "Have you no curiosity to know the particular subject of my meditations?"

"I confess I am a little curious," replied Eveleyn; "will you tell me?"

"Yes; I was thinking to-day why you are not married?"

"Considering that I am not twenty-two yet, I do not think I have lost any time."

"You surprise me," said Mrs. Aylmer; "I thought you were at least six-and-twenty."

"No," replied Eveleyn, "I am not; but even if I had attained that respectable age, I do not think there would be any occasion to hurry myself."

"Possibly not," said Mrs. Aylmer, with a sigh.

"Do you think the marriage state such a happy one," inquired Eveleyn, "that you would recommend every one to enter into it?"

"The experience of one individual is not sufficient to justify a categorical reply. I believe there are more happy than unhappy marriages, and therefore the chances are in favour of the would-be Benedict."

"Pray," said Eveleyn, "why do you consider it a matter of astonishment that I am single? Is it such an easy thing to choose the right helpmate, that all young people should submit to the matrimonial yoke as soon as they emerge into life?"

"For my part I think it is a very difficult thing to determine who is that one person who can best secure your happiness, therefore, in my opinion, delay is far safer than haste. How few are there who marry their first love; and of those, there are fewer still who have not lived to regret the irrevocable step. Early impressions are very vivid, but equally transient, and the disgust that supervenes on the discovery of an error of this kind is perfectly appalling."

"May I ask," said Mrs. Aylmer, "if you speak from personal experience?"

"Not much from experience," he replied, "but a good deal from observation."

"Listen," said the lady, "and I will sketch my past life for you. My parents died, leaving me, an irascible infant, to the care of an old aunt, my father's eldest sister, and to the guardianship of his friend and fellow-soldier. My aunt was in rather straitened circumstances, and equally narrow in her views, yet, withal, she was a good woman, and, in spite of her foibles, I loved her.

"Our house was open to very few friends, nearly all of whom were the contemporaries of my aunt, so that I never enjoyed the companionship of any girls of my own age, or, indeed, of any young persons of either sex. Sermons, varied with Milton and Young's Night Thoughts, were almost the only books, except the Bible, I was permitted to read; but, in spite of the asceticism of our lives, nature found me as much attached to the frivolities of life, in imagination at least, as any London belle. I could not give the feeling expression in a marked degree. I had no pocket-money to buy finery, still I endeavoured to make my clothes appear as much in the fashion as possible, and I tried privately every style I could invent for dressing my hair so as to enhance my appearance. How I longed for society; and when I was fourteen I sighed for a lover, but my innate honesty prevented me from carrying on a clandestine correspondence, although I

was accustomed to see, day after day, the same young men walking up and down the pavement in front of our house, and staring in through the windows, much to the annoyance of my aunt and a one-eyed cat, whose back always bristled up when she saw them approach, as if she recognised in my admirers her personal enemies.

“Monday was so like Sunday in the old house, and every other day so like these two, that, but for church-going twice on the Sabbath, I should soon have forgotten the beginning of the week for the end of it, or *vice versa*. You will understand that my aunt was almost miserly in character, and was perpetually grumbling about the rate of our expenditure, although we lived like hermits.

“One morning she had read a Psalm, wherein trust in the Lord is urged upon us as a duty. No sooner had the breakfast-cloth been removed than she began a tirade against the extravagance of servants and her own thriftlessness, concluding with an emphatic declaration of opinion that she and I would die in the union. I could not help remarking, ‘Aunt, your trust in the Lord is evidently not a practical faith, since you are so repeatedly murmuring;’ whereupon the good lady smiled, and the subject was not renewed for twenty-four hours.

“The monotony of those years impresses me even now, after this lapse of time, with a feeling of awe as I recollect them. How I sighed for change—any change—for communion with others of my own age, for a

portion, at least, of the amusements which those more fortunate than myself enjoyed.

“ Even the curate was considered too fast for my aunt, so we were given up bodily to the Rector. Poor Mr. Malpas! I used to think he lived upon the old straw hassocks and bran cushions of the church, so terribly dry was he. The well-known economy practised in his household rendered him a favourite with my relative, who found in him a kindred spirit, one who could sympathise with her in the jeremiads she used to utter on the increasing luxury of the age.

“ I knew all my aunt’s conversation by heart; it was composed of a string of stereotyped sentences, with one or two poetical quotations. Once that she uttered an observation, she remembered it verbatim, and used to bring it in again and again whenever occasion offered. As she had always a smile for visitors, her reputation was that of a very sweet woman, and many pitied her, because they believed her poorer than she was. Whenever there was a pudding it was brought in first, that my appetite might be cloyed before my hunger was appeased; and beer or wine I never tasted under her roof until I was about to leave it. But society was my chief want, and my heart panted for the world beyond our doors; any world but our own little world, the world of foot-passengers on the pavement, or the world of those who drove past the windows in cabs and carriages. Naturally delicate, I could not have endured many more years, when one day my aunt received a letter, which, from its discomposing effect on

her mind, I presumed to be of consequence, and also to have some relation to myself, because I observed her looking at me several times in a very marked manner. The contents, however, were not communicated to me; indeed, my aunt was so frightfully reticent that she would, if possible, have kept the objects one eye perceived a secret from the other.

“In my perambulations about the house in the course of the day, I perceived that various important additions had been made to our larder, and naturally concluded that a visitor was expected. My imagination immediately set to work to picture the person of the looked-for guest. Was it a lady or a gentleman—a young gentleman or an old foggy?—for, even secluded as my life had been, I had picked up a few slang terms.

“The next day, at noon, there was a double knock at the door—how I longed to jump to the window to see who was there; but my aunt’s grey eyes were on me, and I dared not move. The parlour door opened, the servant announced Major Aylmer. I looked up—it was my guardian, a short, rather stout, dark man, of about forty-five. He shook hands cordially with my aunt, and advancing to me, said, with a pleasant smile, ‘My little ward has become quite a woman.’ I was only four years old when he left England, and had of course forgotten him. My first impression was that of disappointment. My ideal of a soldier was very remote from the original before me. I had imagined an officer to be the handsomest and most magnificent of the *genus homo*; a being made to adore, a sort of divine

hero, a semi-deity. The revulsion of feeling was painful, and I am sure I showed it in my manner; but he was so frank and affable, and withal so courteous, that when he left the house in the evening I could not help acknowledging a feeling of regret.

“Next day he brought us presents, and I remarked that he reserved his choicest gifts for me. Shawls, Indian muslins, jewels, work-boxes, and so forth, were heaped upon me, and I, who had hitherto been clad in cottons and bombazines, saw myself on a sudden the possessor of riches that a court lady would not despise.

“My guardian’s visits were very frequent, and always welcome. My aunt thawed in his presence, the table was more liberally spread, and the whole house assumed almost a jovial aspect. By degrees I perceived that his attentions to myself were very marked; and although I could scarcely imagine that a man so many years my senior could entertain any warmer feelings than friendship for one who was so much his junior, still I could not avoid the conclusion that he loved me.

“My aunt had also been speculating on the subject, and the fact becoming patent to her, she paid me a degree of deference that soon convinced me I had become in her eyes an important person. You are perhaps disposed to ask whether I reciprocated my guardian’s affection. At first I did not, but by degrees I became accustomed to him, and it flattered my vanity to think that I, a child almost, might any day see at my feet a Major in the army.

“He did not, however, declare himself when I ex-

pected he would have done so, and this rather piqued me, consequently I evinced, in that spirit of coquetry which is inherent in our sex, a warmer manner towards him than I had yet done.

“ He took me to the theatres and concerts, and more than once we drove in Rotten Row. We visited the picture galleries together, and his criticisms first inspired me with a taste for painting. Books were bought and presented to me, and their contents discussed ; a new world was opened to my imagination ; and though I felt appalled at the extent of my ignorance, my guardian’s remarks were so encouraging that I resolved to acquire something more than a superficial knowledge of the different subjects we, or rather the Major, conversed on, for I was necessarily a listener very often.

“ What a change had taken place in my life since his arrival ! I breathed another atmosphere ; I partook of pleasures long sighed for ; and last, not least, a complete revolution had taken place in my wardrobe. One morning, when it was arranged that Major Aylmer should call for me *en route* to Richmond, I received a note saying that he was summoned to the continent on important business, and would be unable to return for some weeks. In this interval of time I learned more fully than I had yet done to appreciate the attentions of my guardian ; thrown back on my own resources, and the companionship of my aunt, I felt how entirely my happiness depended on him, and was obliged to confess to myself that he had a nearer place in my affections than I had hitherto believed. Again the dull

routine of our monotonous life commenced, rendered fifty times more unbearable by contrast with the last two months. Again the eternal round of my aunt's sentences was unbroken by another voice ; again her unceasing grumbling rendered every day a burden. Only yesterday I listened to the conversation of an accomplished man of the world, easy, fluent, sprightly, and by turns improving without being didactic. Scenes of travel, pictures of foreign life, stories of battles, made the hours pass unnoticed. Now my aunt's poverty of thought, sterility of imagination, and tasteless insipidity of expression, rendered each day an age. I could not bear it, I spent all the time I could command in my own room, and found intense relief in solitude. But the old lady missed my society, and grew sulky ; so, for my peace sake, I was obliged to be with her whenever her household duties permitted her to sit down.

“ You cannot wonder that under these circumstances I should miss Major Aylmer, and long for his return ; he came at the expiration of a month, and in a few days proposed in due form. I accepted him. In his society I had every prospect of happiness ; without him life was a blank ; moreover he offered my aunt to settle ten thousand pounds on me ; and had an alliance with him been ever so distasteful to my feelings, my relative under these circumstances would have insisted on my compliance.

“ In two months we were married ; I was not seventeen, my husband forty-five. Before the end of the year we set out for India.

"Ours was a hasty marriage, and we had each to find out the other's failings. Ere long I discovered that my husband, though of an affectionate disposition, was intolerant and hasty; and he found in me a petulant and peevish girl. We, however, got on very well together for some time, until I began to move a good deal in society, when my personal attractions gained me considerable attention, so that I believe I became a reigning beauty, and my entertainments were the most fashionable at the Station.

"Thrown without previous training, and utterly without experience, into the gay Anglo-Indian world, I fear I made myself conspicuous as a flirt. Probably there was some excuse for me; Major Aylmer was almost the only gentleman I knew previous to my marriage, and from the manner in which our acquaintance was made, I had no opportunity of contrasting him with other men; but when I found myself the centre of almost a little court, when colonels and general officers paid me homage, and all the women hated me, I felt that I had been wronged, that Major Aylmer had taken advantage of my inexperience, and had made me his wife by judicious management, instead of first winning my affections in the open field.

"I confess that all feeling of gratitude was lost sight of; I only remembered that my husband had found me a child brought up like a nun, and that he had made me his wife while I was in utter ignorance of the world, and deprived of the possibility of making another choice. How immensely this fact diminished

from all his good qualities, and blinded me to all his real worth. I only saw in him a short, plain, dark, hasty-tempered man, old enough to be my father; while around me every day thronged the young and handsome, his equals in ability and attainments, his superiors in every other aspect—save in the quality of honesty.

“Do not suppose that I disgraced him. Oh, no, my pride prevented that; neither did I love another; and I believe he never suspected me of doing so. We have thus dragged on through the past years together, both of us unhappy. My girlish admiration for him gradually vanished, while I grew cold and indifferent to all the world. I know men have said that they believed me to be without a soul—that I was simply an animated statue; and so, in truth, I was to them. Their admiration pleased, their attention flattered me, and it gratified my vanity to exercise the power that I possessed over the poor fools who would have swum the Ganges to please me.

“I have made many efforts to love Colonel Aylmer. I thought that respect for his worth would mellow into a warmer feeling. Sometimes I used to think a change had taken place in my regard for him. But some petulance on my part, or violence on his, would banish every idea of tenderness. If I had had some friend in whom I could have confided, it would have relieved me; but there was no one, as I told you. The women were jealous and hated me, and I reciprocated the feeling with interest; so I had to bear it all, with a win-

ning smile for society, and, oh, God! that I should say so, too often a frown for my husband. The chains have worn into my soul. Pride alone has sustained me, but I have leaned upon a broken reed that has entered into my side. My health failed at last, and the Indian climate, which is fatal to children, obliged me to bring my little girl to England.

"Eight years of bondage, eight years of pent-up misery—all avenues shut to me—I could not pour out my sorrows in the ear of heaven, it would have rebuked, not comforted me. There is no law that can justify me, save the law of outraged nature, and nature, men and angels say, must not be obeyed, but subdued, subdued."

She closed her eyes, and continued in an audible whisper, quite unconscious of Eveleyn's presence—"Struggle against it! Have I not struggled day and night—night and day? I cannot quell the demon. Oh, my poor heart! When will it all end? when shall I be at rest? I cannot return to India! I cannot go back. No! no!" and she shuddered till the couch shook beneath her. "Oh God, that I were dead," she cried; covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears. †

Eveleyn felt frightfully embarrassed; what should he do? Prudence suggested "Leave the house!" Inclination whispered "Stay." Sentiment murmured "Soothe her."

He rose from his seat and went to the couch where Mrs. Aylmer sat, with her face still buried in her hands, and the tears dropping on the floor. The words stuck

in his throat, his position was so novel, his embarrassment so great. What should he say? He could not tell; so he put his hand upon her shoulder, and with an effort he managed to whisper—"Don't cry!" He might as well have told the river to roll backwards.

Mrs. Aylmer's tale was a true one; she had never made a confidant before. The impulse to tell the story of her life was irresistible; and now that she had repeated it she felt ashamed, although she did not regret having made her confession. Come what might, she had spoken out freely, and her future depended on the young man who stood beside her.

Did Eveleyn love her? love a married woman! He could not answer truly, he had not paused to analyze his feelings. He knew he had flirted with her, and she had flattered him by receiving his attentions; he had been assailed on the weak side of his character, his vanity. She, one of the elite, one of the County set, allied to the best families in Clayshire; a beautiful woman, a woman of property, education, and high station, had preferred his society to any other.

Was she not unhappy? Had not he also been disappointed in life? Were not their tastes and opinions similar, or sufficiently different to render conversation piquant? Were they not by force of some mysterious unity of feeling constantly drawn together? Oh, Eveleyn! Eveleyn! listen not to the voice of the tempter; be strong in your high resolves; be true to your best nature.

His hand trembles with excitement, he is scarcely

master of himself; a mist rises before his eyes, his brain is confused as if with the fumes of wine. As a basilisk glares on its prey, so does the temptation of a forbidden love lure the soul to its destruction. There is a spurious bravery in the idea of despising a sacred law, and laughing to scorn the dictates of heavenly order. All this did Eveleyn feel in its fiercest strength.

"Don't cry," said he again.

One hand dropped from her face; he caught it as it fell, and held it.

"I am sure, Eveleyn, you despise me in your heart."

"Despise you, Mrs. Aylmer—no! Oh, no!"

"I think I have been mad lately, Eveleyn—I have suffered enough to deprive me of reason; but it is all my own fault."

"Do not reproach yourself."

"Oh, Eveleyn, I have been torn to pieces by conflicting emotions. Sometimes I have determined to leave this town—to see you no more; oh, it would have been well had I done so, but my courage failed me. My selfishness will prove your curse; I knew that if I left, you would forget me, and the thought made me frantic—I could bear it no longer; and now I have humbled my woman's pride before you, and have confessed that which should have never passed my lips."

There was a light footstep on the stair. Eveleyn resumed his seat, Mrs. Aylmer turned from the light, and her little girl entered the room.

"I must say good morning, Mrs. Aylmer," said Eveleyn, and he took his leave.

When he reached the street, his senses were perfectly bewildered. He had been hurried away by the flood-tide of folly into an extravagance that he almost repented of. Almost—only! Of late his nature had changed. That high sense of honour and hatred of crooked paths no longer existed in their integrity; as though he would revenge himself on his affections because Kate Howard had refused him he had since that morning laid himself open to the influences of evil, in whatever form they might appear most attractive.

Chance threw him and Mrs. Aylmer together. Sentiment continued the acquaintance, vanity spurred him on, till ultimately the catastrophe which he might have anticipated from his conduct surprised and paralysed him. It was hardly likely that one who, like himself, had been accustomed to reflection, who had at bottom no small sense of religion, who had habituated himself to look beyond, should of a sudden abandon the whole course of his life, and rush headlong to destruction.

So long as he only knew Mrs. Aylmer as a pleasant companion or a fascinating friend, it amused him to flirt with her: besides, it was no small triumph to be the acknowledged favourite of such a lovely woman; and except a passing sting of self-reproach, month after month rolled on, while his intimacy gradually increased, without any great effort on his part to snap the chain that bound him to her, until at last his affections were engaged.

He himself would, in all probability, have never made any advance which would have brought on a scene such as he had just passed through, and he never contem-

plated the possibility that the lady might take the initiative. Had any one told him in the morning that before night he would be the acknowledged object of a married lady's love, he would have kicked the prophet out of the house.

The sacred wall of reserve that hems in the heart of a woman had been broken down ; each had virtually confessed that which both should have concealed and rooted out ; but the deed was done—what should be the next step ? Should he take feeling for a guide, and float unthinkingly down the stream of inclination, or should he face the difficulty boldly, confess his error, and maintain his integrity ?

Too late ! was the answer that his heart made. You have wilfully won her love, and honour forbids that, having attained your end, you should cast her off.

"Again," he thought, "greater evil still will ensue if I don't check this folly. Though at the risk of exciting her disgust and hatred, I should break off this intimacy. But what will be the consequences ? I have caused her to take one false step, this initiation in the path of evil will assuredly lead to farther wickedness, and she will be lost through me. A curse upon my despicable folly ! How can I save her ?"

This was the question he proposed to himself, but the answer was not easily to be found. He made two resolutions. First, that he would not relinquish her society altogether. Second, that he would never see her alone again, if he could avoid doing so.

He hoped in this manner to find the solution of the problem.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNEXPECTED WITNESS.

HANDSOMELY as Haughton Hall was furnished, some change or decoration was deemed necessary to render the mansion fit for its young mistress. London upholsterers were sent down, new hangings graced the wall, new carpets the floors. Some rooms were refurnished, articles of *virtu* were purchased, and several fine paintings were added to the valuable collection already possessed by Levinge. Of all the apartments, the most care was displayed in the arrangement of Kate's boudoir. The room was large and lofty, and the French windows opened on a balcony facing the south, which looked out upon the glorious old woods, when through the vistas of the trees glimpses of the river could be seen at the bottom of the park. A soft peach-blossom silk lined the walls, relieved by a pale blue cornice, in which a wreath of leaves stood out in white. Tables of fancy wood were placed here and there, and in the centre stood one of papier mâché, with a beautifully painted picture of the Island in the "Lady of the Lake."

The carpet was of the softest texture, the pattern simply leaves on a white ground, and velvet to match covered the couches and chairs. Two large mirrors on console tables faced each other. There were no pictures, but several statuettes, and a splendid Hebe and Apollo graced the apartment. Beautifully bound books were arranged on the tables, together with exquisite scent bottles, and rare specimens of china.

This room was reserved as a surprise. Levinge never alluded to it, and his mother was pledged to secrecy.

"Kate Howard," the old lady used to say, "is a fortunate girl to have my son for her husband, and Haughton Hall for her home."

It was determined that the marriage should take place as soon as possible after the prorogation of Parliament, and that the happy couple should take the Cumberland and Westmoreland lakes for their wedding tour. The day had been fixed for the ministerial white-bait dinner, and Levinge wrote to say he would be at the Hall on the tenth of August, and hoped that Kate would not delay the wedding; so that day sennight was agreed upon.

"Levinge is a deuced lucky dog," said Charley Davis to Mr. Howard, "to carry off in your daughter the handsomest girl and richest heiress in Clayshire."

"Edward doesn't marry for money, I can tell you," said the Squire, who thought his young friend had borne rather hard on the word "heiress."

"Of course not," replied Charley with a sarcastic grin, "nobody does. I never knew a man or woman

yet who didn't marry for love, pure disinterested love ; and I dare say Levinge is like the rest of the world, regardless of self."

"None of your chaff, Charles," said Mr. Howard, not half pleased.

"Joking apart," said Charley, "nobody thinks of marrying for love now-a-days, except city clerks and curates ; and that being the only capital they possess, they invest it boldly in the venture."

All Bricklinton discussed the marriage of their Member with Miss Howard, and not a few envied Levinge's luck. Endless reports were being circulated as to the splendour of the nuptials, the dowry of the bride, and a hundred cognate subjects ; but however different the tales, all agreed in one particular, that the tenants of the bridegroom and the bride's father were to dine together in honour of the occasion, and the workmen at Lemford were also to be liberally entertained.

The ladies, however, have a voice in these matters ; and when Kate was consulted, although she heartily entered into and approved of the suggestion to entertain the tenantry and workmen, yet she repudiated the idea of a grand wedding, and insisted that the arrangements should be as simple and plain as possible.

She did not regard her marriage day as an occasion for the display of millinery and gratification of female vanity, but rather as a day for the solemnization of a high and holy engagement, when new duties would be assumed, fresh obligations entered into, and extended relations begun.

To her it was not only an important but a serious step, when she should give up her liberty, and relinquish her individuality; although the person for whom she was about to make this sacrifice was the man of her choice, in whom she implicitly trusted, believing that under his care, and supported by his strength, she would not only be happier, but would have an opportunity of being useful in an extended sphere, and thus be able to accomplish greater things for the good of her fellow-beings and the glory of God.

So both father and lover yielded to her wishes, and it was arranged that there should be no other guests than the nearest relatives of both families; that there should be no bridesmaids but two, and as the parish church adjoined the grounds, the bridal party would dispense with carriages.

Thursday morning, the seventeenth of August, broke with an angry flash of red in the east, that spread from the horizon to the zenith, betokening a wet day. The sun rose above the earth, but ere the lower edge of his disc was seen, the upper part was hid behind a black band of heavy cloud, until at length the great orb was altogether concealed, and a cold grey light streamed over the landscape. Kate was awake early, her usual cup of tea had been brought to her before she rose, and she proceeded with her toilet as calmly as if no change in her old life was about to take place. She shed no tears, and affected no sorrow, as some young ladies do when they are about leaving a home in which there is nothing to regret. But she felt subdued, and per-

formed her matutinal devotions under the influence of, probably, more than usually serious impressions ; though, when she descended to the breakfast parlour, the same sweet placid smile that ever marked her morning greeting beamed in her face as she kissed her father's cheek.

" Good morning, my dear," said the Squire, and something very like a tear twinkled in his eye as he returned her embrace. His daughter had been his chief companion for many years, and now he was about to lose her, for a married daughter is almost as if she were buried as far as regards her own family. " I fear, my dear, you will have a wet afternoon for travelling ; but come, breakfast is waiting."

Like a gambler who plays for a high stake, and stakes his all upon the die, Levinge nervously watched the hands on the dial of the time-piece, which to him appeared scarcely to move. This seventeenth of August was to determine a crisis in his fate ; from this day he would commence life anew ; he would cast his old garments behind him, and come out adorned in the robes of integrity and honour. The past should no more recur in his life, its features should never re-appear, all trace and resemblance should be buried in oblivion, and from to-day his regeneration should be dated. Should his former companions and abettors laugh at him, he would not heed their jibes ; the whist table at the Jockey Club should fascinate him no longer respectability should be his aim, virtue his delight, and rest his reward. He was wearied with travelling in

tortuous paths, and disgusted with dissipation; he now felt that all that he had deemed pleasure was de- to he had been cheated with shadows, now he would lusion. Hither pursue realities.

All this he had determined in his mind to accomplish by the strength of his own indomitable will. Everything had been conquered by him in this manner, and he required no other armour. Men and women had submitted to it; at home and abroad, within his sphere, it had enabled him to obtain his ends.

Freedom of action he had ever enjoyed, what power should now curtail his liberty?

He, the slave of circumstance or necessity, if ever such an idea occurred to him for a moment, he would have laughed it to scorn. O human pride! human pride! Each man his own divinity. The "I," the sole director of his life—"I will, and thus it shall be."

And is it so? See where yonder running river rolls on impetuously, now dashing over its banks, and sweeping houses and homesteads with the besom of destruction, seems it not free? But when the rains dry up, and the sea drinks in its flood, it returns to its old bounds, and the grass over which it rushed triumphant lifts up its head and laughs. Laws regulate it, and banks bound it; within and sometimes without this boundary it has liberty, but its freedom at best is limited. Follow the current to the ocean; there the waters seem uncontrolled, there the billows roll as if without a master.

"The armaments that thunder strike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake
And monarchs tremble in their capitals—
The oak leviathans' whose huge ribs make
Their clay-creator the vain title take
Of Lord of thee, and arbiter of war—
These are thy toys, and as the snowy flake
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the armada's pride, or spoils of Trafalgar."

Yet with all its power and majesty—its liberty and strength—it has its shores, where the rocks start up and bid defiance to its waves, and the cliffs despise the impotent fury of its breakers. Within its limits seems it not free, the grandest emblem of liberty? But at best it is but the fettered thrall of other laws, the slave of the gentle moon. So man within a certain area enjoys the freedom of the will—he determines, then he acts, but he is nevertheless hedged in by circumstance, and influenced by motives, being at the same time ignorant of the laws of their action, and sublimely unconscious how present results have been effected by antecedent causes.

The law of existence is that we live, and move, and have our being in God. Without God we are divorced from his law, which is the law of life, and become subjected to another law, the law of death; an all-powerful law, terrible and inexorable. So long only as we move in obedience to highest order, can orderly results follow; if we depart therefrom, we must look for other effects. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.

Yesterday measurably forms to-day—to-day is the parent of to-morrow. The present is hemmed in by the past, and he who has once sunk below the level of truth, cannot ascend by one bold stroke, one determination of his will, but only by continued efforts can he regain the position he has lost.

Not so Levinge. Selfish gratification had hitherto determined his conduct. Interest now demanded that a change should take place, which he resolved should be immediate, nor did he anticipate any difficulty in carrying out his new views.

Having to drive several miles, he and his “best man” (a London friend) set out for the church immediately after breakfast, half-past-ten being the time appointed for the ceremony. Before they reached their destination it began to rain, and the gloom of the atmosphere so affected his spirits, that his friend observed—

“One would think you were going to be hanged to-day, Levinge! Is the prospect of the loss of liberty so very distressing?”

Levinge did not reply, but ordered the postillions to drive faster, and the pace freshened from a trot to a hand-gallop.

So they reached the church nearly an hour before the time.

In spite of the threatening weather, a large crowd of rustics were collected to see the grand folks. A wreath of evergreens and flowers decorated the gateway; the interior of the church was adorned in the same style; and five or six half-naked children, intended to represent

cherubs, shivered in the porch, armed with baskets laden with garden trophies to strew before the happy couple.

Levinge and his friend sauntered into the old building. Plash, plash, the large drops of rain fell heavily against the panes of glass in the church windows, and the rising wind sighed mournfully in the branches of the old oaks.

"They will be obliged to give up the idea of walking," said Levinge.

"Of course," said his friend, and both seemed at a loss for a topic of conversation; probably the former was occupied with his reflections, and the latter was not a talkative man.

The old sexton came up and pointed out the Howard monuments, and the Howard vault which lay beneath the altar, the steps of which were covered by a huge stone slab, in which were two iron rings. But as the effigies looked anything but lively, and the inscriptions were of the usual pious character, neither of the friends appeared to derive any interest from their contemplation.

There was the sound of shuffling feet in the porch, and the Rector, the Rev. Samuel Jones, bald, bland, and unctuous, made his appearance smiling benignly in anticipation of a large fee. He cordially greeted his friend Mr. Levinge, and bowed graciously to the strange gentleman, with a look as much as to say, "My service to you, sir! I shall be happy at any time to tie the matrimonial knot for you;" then, after disappearing

into the damp vestry, he then came forth arrayed in an old surplice covered with mould-spots as thick as the marks on a leopard's skin.

The groomsman remarked to his friend—"The parson's robe has evidently suffered from 'surplus' moisture."

Levinge grinned.

The reverend gentleman, unconscious of the observation, with another bow, which on this occasion was directed to the Howard tomb-stone, entered the space enclosed by the communion rails, and with Prayer-book in hand, and a stereotyped smile on his lips, calmly awaited the rest of the party.

Hark! There's a shout—the gravel grates beneath a dozen wheels; there is a banging of carriage steps and doors, and the bride with her father enters the church. She is paler than usual, but perfectly composed; leaning on Mr. Howard's arm till she reaches the chancel, then her intended husband takes her hand and leads her up to the altar. Some delay occurred before the rest of the party came in, but after a little while they all assembled, and the service commenced.

The clergyman had proceeded as far as the words, "Therefore if any man can shew any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together," when a deep groan resounded through the church; everyone started. Again the question was renewed, the minister pausing as if for an answer, but none came. He continued; but as he continued the personal exhortation, the door of the reading-desk opened, a young girl

sprang out exclaiming—"I forbid the marriage," and fled down the aisle.

"Stop her!" roared the Squire.

"Never mind, let her go, it is some maniac," said Levinge.

"No, stop her!" screamed the Squire, using a very expressive epithet, and the people, always ready for a scene, blocked up the passage; but quick as lightning the unknown entered a pew, jumped on the seat, then mounted the rail and springing from one to the other with the agility of a cat, continued her flight.

"The door!" roared the Squire, "shut the door!" and just as the poor creature reached the archway, the oak panel was slammed in her face. Resistance was useless, so she folded her arms and stood motionless.

"Bring her here!" shouted the Squire; and half dragging, half lifting her slender form, a couple of bumpkins brought her into the chancel.

Levinge felt the blood tingle in his veins; all eyes were turned on him, but he bore the scrutiny with marvellous composure.

"Who are you?" said Mr. Howard, as the girl was brought before him.

No reply.

"What do you mean by interrupting the service?" said Mr. Jones.

No answer.

"If you do not speak," said Mr. Howard, "I'll send you to jail for a month;" and then, addressing the

crowd in a loud key, he asked if there was a policeman outside.

"Yes, your honor!" said a score of voices, and an order for the appearance of the civil functionary sped from mouth to mouth.

"Edward," said Kate in a low tone, "do you know who this girl is?"

"I have never seen her before," said Levinge.

"That is enough," said Kate, "take her away."

Willing as she was to fly before, she was now as reluctant to move. The policeman approached, and taking her by the arm, he gave her an admonitory shove, saying in his gruff voice, "You must come along o' me;" and the women in the crowd, whose feelings had been painfully restrained, now burst forth in chorus, "The jade! Fie for shame! The jade! She's no better nor she should be!"

Zizzi (for it was she), for the first time, looked Levinge full in the face; had she seen in his glance one look of kindly feeling, one trace of affection, she would have remained speechless, and suffered any punishment for his sake; for her love, at the sight of him returning with all its force, had extinguished the resentment which had almost maddened her. But no, she encountered a stony stare that masked a tempest of rage, and her feelings underwent an instantaneous change. Eluding the grasp of the policeman by a sudden spring, she turned, and striding up to the altar rails, seized them with her left hand, and extending her right towards Levinge, exclaimed loud enough for all present to hear,—“I am his wife!”

"It is a lie!" said the accused stepping forward.

"Edward," said the young girl, "deny me not;" and with extended arms, she rushed towards him.

He clenched his hand to strike, but she fell senseless at his feet; a miniature case dropped out of her dress, the spring gave way with the concussion, it opened and displayed his own likeness, one of his first presents to the Greek girl.

The people saw his arm raised, and afterwards spread the report that he had knocked her down.

He heard his uncle's muttered curse, he saw a sneer on his groomsman's face, a low hiss rang through the crowd, he dared not look at Kate. Turning, he rushed out of the church, his heart burning with fury, because his villainy had been discovered in time, and his prospects irretrievably ruined.

Kate had only sufficient strength to say, "Let the poor girl be taken care of."

"I will do so," said the Rector.

Leaning heavily on her father's arm, who himself could scarcely stand, amid the sobs of the women she slowly retraced her steps to the carriage. The rain falling on her face, together with the freshness of the air, in a degree revived her, and still maintaining her composure, amid the respectful silence of the bystanders, she and her father got into the chariot and drove off.

Nothing is so rapid in its mutations as popular feeling. A moment before, Zizzi had an object of execration—now she was the centre of universal pity.

"She's very handsome for a furrener," said the old matrons as they raised her and loosed her dress.

"I never seed such beautiful hair," said another, as Zizzi's long locks became unfastened, and streamed down almost to the ground.

Mrs. Jones and her daughter, who in the gallery had been spectators of the strange scene, now made their appearance, and with the aid of smelling salts and cold water the poor sufferer was at length restored to consciousness. At first she stared wildly about, like one who is in a dream, but by degrees her perceptions became unclouded, and all the incidents of the morning recurred to her memory. Her first question was, "Where is he?"

She mentioned no name, but all knew for whom she asked.

"Gone," was the reply.

"Where?"

"Nobody knows."

The faintness returned, and she again swooned away.

"We must carry her into the house," said the Rector; and suiting the action to the word, he threw off his surplice, lifted Zizzi in his arms, carried her like a child, and placed her on the old sofa in the Rectory parlour.

The crowd seemed very anxious to follow. Mr. Jones bade them disperse, and with exemplary obedience they separated to their homes, or to the public-house, to canvass the strange events of the morning.

It was evident that Zizzi was weak from want of

food ; and as soon as she could take it, a glass of wine was administered, and various simples followed. The Rector and his family had the good taste to refrain from questioning her until she regained her strength ; and Zizzi maintained strict silence, except expressing her thanks in as brief a manner as she could consistently with her gratitude for their kindness.

Much the good folks wondered as to who and what she was. Her gloves yet concealed her hands, and the ladies tried very hard to look through the kid to ascertain if she wore a wedding ring. Every now and then the poor girl burst into fits of weeping, moaning and crying piteously ; the good-hearted Joneses cried, too, for sympathy, and even the Rector blew his nose.

They failed to induce her to take any animal food ; but, to please them, she partook of a basin of soup, that refreshed her more than anything she had taken. She seemed disposed to sleep. Carefully darkening the windows, and covering her with a shawl, they left the room.

“ I should so like to hear her story,” said Miss Jones.
“ What she must have suffered !”

“ What shall we do with her, Mr. Jones ?” said his wife.

“ We must ascertain,” replied her husband, “ if she has any friends, and where they are ; then we must take steps to restore her to her family ; meanwhile, we must keep her here, and consult with Mr. Howard.”

Dinner-time having arrived, the family sat down to their comfortable meal. Before they had finished, a

note arrived from Mr. Howard, written at Kate's request, begging that the victim of Levinge's villainy might be taken care of until she should be placed in the hands of her friends.

"How truly kind," said Mrs. Jones, "of Miss Howard to think of this poor girl amid her own distress."

"It is not the first time," said her husband, "that she has practised abnegation of self, as I have witnessed before now."

"I think," remarked the daughter, "that Miss Howard has every reason to be grateful to this stranger for saving her from being the wife of such a wretch as Levinge. Do you think, papa, that this poor thing's statement is true; that she is married to him?"

"I dare say," rejoined the Rector, "that she believes so; but I hardly think that Levinge would, under any circumstances, run the risk of being indicted for bigamy; I fear she is only his victim. Indeed certain rumours have reached me of a fair lady who resided with him in London, but I treated it as scandal; now I confess I think him capable of any iniquity."

While this conversation was going on in the dining room, Zizzi woke from her nap. We must relate her story since we last saw her.

On her arrival at Syra, she soon discovered that she had been imposed on by a fabrication of the basest kind, and all the love in her heart changing to hatred, she resolved to return to England to be revenged. It was not so easy to put this idea into execution, her own family were spies on her movements, and Levinge's

servant seemed never to sleep. Affecting to be reconciled to her changed condition, by degrees suspicion became less active, still she was not allowed her liberty ; however, before a fortnight had passed an opportunity offered, and, by means which it is not necessary to detail here, she effected her escape and eventually reached England.

It was not part of her scheme to shew herself at St. John's Wood, but passing by the house in a cab she saw that it was shut—at any rate, the establishment of servants was broken up. It at once occurred to her to seek out her former maid, who had always been attached to her, and on whom, in the days of her prosperity, she had conferred many important kindnesses. She remembered that she lived in Greenwich ; and though she had forgotten the number, she recollected the name of the street. Thither she proceeded, and found her old servant at home, who furnished her with all the particulars of Levinge's doings, thus enabling her to make her appearance in the church in time to preserve Kate Howard from a fate worse than death.

Rage and jealousy had so completely possessed her soul, that every other sentiment was excluded, and she panted for the moment when she should play the part of Nemesis. Strange to say, no sooner did she hear his voice, as he walked up the aisle, passing the reading desk where she lay concealed, than she experienced an entire revolution of feeling, and could she have escaped unseen she would have rushed away. But when the bride appeared, and peeping through a crack in the

woodwork she saw Levinge take her hand and exchange one of those tender looks which she knew so well, then her first idea once more became uppermost, and she burned with the desire to be avenged.

It was accomplished ! He whom she loved better than life was ruined, utterly destroyed by herself. True, he had forsaken her, broken his oath, and despised her love ; he had outraged her woman's nature, betrayed her, and stamped her with ignominy ; but now she felt that it would have been easier to have borne all this rather than the self-reproach which had frenzied her.

" Oh, Edward ! Edward !" she cried—" My love, my more than life ; oh, that thou wert here to kill me ! Death at thy hands would be a priceless boon."

Then her tears fell till they were exhausted.

" There is no hope left for me. Thou art gone for ever. Thy name a curse, thy memory a thing of scorn, and I have done it all, and thou art lost to me. God knows that I loved thee ; oh, how I worshipped thee ! and thou art still to me more than heaven and all saints. I cannot stay here, I will go where thou goest, I will follow thee to the world's end—and where thou diest I will die. Oh, to see thee once more—to hear thee speak even in wrath—and I will see thee !" .

The idea of action stimulated her, and she restrained the passionate outpourings of grief. Presently she rose from the sofa and walked to the window ; it opened on the lawn, at the bottom of which the high road ran that leads to Bricklinton, and also to Haughton Hall.

In pursuance of her scheme of vengeance, she had

spent the two previous days in the neighbourhood, and had obtained a tolerably correct idea of the topography of that part of the country. So, as soon as the evening should close in, she determined to set out.

It was about six o'clock when her kind hostess and her daughter paid her a visit ; they found her much calmer, but weighed down with sorrow, and very indisposed to speak.

"You must not think me ungrateful for your unexpected kindness," said Zizzi, "because I do not enter into conversation."

"No ! no ! my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Jones. "It is much better that you should be quiet."

Tea was brought in, of which they all partook ; and the Rector, who joined them at their meal, afterwards read a chapter from the Bible, selecting the eleventh of Matthew, the last three verses of which, beginning, "Come all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," particularly struck the attention of the poor sufferer, and she begged to have them repeated to her, saying, "I have never heard that message before."

"Never heard it before ?" echoed the Rector.

"No ! I am a Catholic," was the answer.

"Poor child !" said Mrs. Jones, wiping away a tear.

" 'And I will give you rest,' " repeated Zizzi.
"Rest !"

Whatever servility there may have been in the Rector's composition, he possessed many sterling qualities. Already he had taken a deep interest in the fate of the

stranger beneath his roof, and had revolved more than one plan for her future well-being.

"Let us pray," said the good man. They all knelt, and without any attempt at effect, he poured forth a short and simple petition that touched the hearts of his hearers, for they felt the earnestness of his spirit. After this devotional exercise was concluded—

"Come, my dear," said the Rector, "let us leave our young friend for a little while, so that she may try to sleep again."

Zizzi thanked them with a look as eloquent as words.

Evening had set in, the shadows of the trees on the lawn deepened, until they were blended into the all-pervading gloom; for though the rain had ceased, the clouds hung low, cutting the daylight shorter.

Zizzi got up quietly, put on her bonnet and mantle, walked on tip-toe to the window, unfastened the bolt, and noiselessly stepped out on to the grass. She knew that in stealing off in this clandestine manner she was acting ungratefully to her new friends, and subjecting herself to the worst suspicions. But the desire to have an interview with Levinge was so strong that it overpowered every other consideration. The impulse under which she acted was irresistible.

The night wind, surcharged with moisture, blew cold and chill from the south-east directly in her face. Zizzi drew her mantle closer round her, and shivered as she hurried along the wet roads.

Fearing her flight would be discovered, and that a pursuit would be instituted, she walked along as fast



as possible, running down and toiling up the hills with shortened breath. Now the sound of a carriage approaching made her start, or the clatter of a horse's feet behind her on the lonely road made her heart beat wildly, and once or twice she scrambled over gates, to avoid the chance of discovery by any wayfarer. Beyond this she had no fear.

Haughton Hall was ten good miles distant, and, tired from previous exertion, after she had been three hours on the road she felt as if she must lie down in the ditch. The fear of pursuit and capture had as yet spurred her on ; but as the chances of her being overtaken diminished, reaction set in, and to prevent herself from fainting, she leaned against a milestone, until, feeling a little rested, she resumed her journey.

She had formed no plan, she knew not what she should do when she arrived at her destination. Levinge might not be there, the servants might maltreat her ! Should she disturb the household ? It was already past midnight.

These were questions which she hardly paused to ask ; a voice within urged her on, whatever the consequences might be she could but obey. On—on—on, even if it were to die at his feet.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NIGHT.

WHEN Levinge left the church, he sprang into his carriage, and ordered the postillions to drive home.

Fortunately for him, his mother was on a visit to a friend in Bricklinton, and the house was under the care of the servants. The old butler first heard the sound of the wheels as the carriage dashed up the avenue, and he jumped with surprise. Who could it be? The next moment the well-known liveries flashed across the window.

The hall door was thrown open, and the master, as the servants called him, got out of the carriage.

The butler was about to avail himself of the privilege of long servitude to ask if anything had happened, but, as he afterwards remarked to the housekeeper,—“When I see his face, I couldn’t have spoke to him,—no, not for all the port wine in the cellar.”

The postillions were immediately besieged for intelligence; but as the curtain had not dropped when they left, they were only able to furnish their own version of

the tale, which slightly contradicted fact. One said as how Miss Howard, all along of jealousy, changed her mind in the church. The other said that a strange lady tried to stab the master, and Miss Howard was so frightened, she wouldn't be married until the —— was hanged.

Levinge crossed the hall with hasty strides, and entered the morning room, carefully fastening the door behind him.

Once only did the butler knock to know at what hour dinner should be served ; and he received such a peremptory command to avoid intruding on his master's privacy, that the old man trotted off terrified to his pantry, thanking his stars at the same time that nobody had heard the order, which would have lowered him in the eyes of the denizens of the servants' hall for ever.

Wine stood on the buffet ; Levinge poured it out in tumblers, and drank one after the other, until he emptied the decanter, without affecting his brain in the least degree. He threw himself into an arm-chair, and sat gnashing his teeth with fury. "Ruined, damned," he muttered, "and all for the sake of a silly girl ! I thought I might have depended on Withers, and he has betrayed me. Would that he were within my reach now ! Curse him !"

He then went on in a broken strain of violent language, now muttering, now in a louder key—then he would remain silent ; but passion had so completely taken possession of his soul, that he was incapable of coherent thought, much less could he fully estimate the

nature of the position in which he was placed, or form plans for the future.

His brain seemed to whirl round, strange fancies bewildered him, and almost deprived him of reason. In a few hours he became cooler, and resting his head on his hands, he endeavoured to collect his faculties ; but the blow had fallen so unexpectedly, and the results had been so direful, that he could hardly grasp the reality. Libertine though he was, he still had a great regard for his reputation, and always threw a cloak over his vices; indeed, so guarded was he in his conversation, that some persons believed him to be a correct man. Moreover he dearly loved power, and though he affected to despise flunkeyism, no one enjoyed flattery more than himself. He had, in a word, lived for himself, with the intention ever to keep on good terms with public opinion. Now the mask was torn aside, the whited sepulchre was opened, and all the gossips of the kingdom would gloat over the disclosure of the rottenness within. Horrible thought ! To be pilloried in the gaze of millions as a scoundrel and a villain, to afford a theme for novelists, to become a subject for penny-a-liners. All influence lost, all ambition thwarted. All respect forfeited, the whole aim of a life destroyed at once.

A hell of bitter thoughts behind — a future of despair !

“ I will not endure this torment,” said he—“ I will defy their malice.”

He got up from his seat, and with as much coolness

as he could command went up stairs into his study, where he kept a pair of loaded pistols. To his surprise the case was not on the table in its usual place; after, however, a moment of reflection, he remembered that he had taken it into his bedroom. Passing along the corridor, the door of the beautiful boudoir was open, but the apartment in all its elegance seemed mournfully desolate. "Ah!" said Levinge—"as the comedy is changed to a tragedy, this will be the appropriate scene for the last act; moreover it will suggest the thought that disappointed affection nerved my hand." Proceeding to the bedroom he found the case, and taking out one of the pistols, he carefully drew the charge to prevent any chance of a mis-fire; and ascertaining that the powder was up in the nipple, he put on a cap and retraced his steps to the boudoir.

The soft evening light reflected from the walls, tinted the atmosphere with a rosy hue. It was apparently the last place in the world likely to be selected for the commission of self-murder. Brightness and cheerfulness pervaded the room—it seemed a very shrine of happiness. To Levinge, however, it was suggestive of all that he abhorred. It brought before his mind the scene of the morning as clearly as if it were being enacted before him; and if he hesitated at all before, he did so no longer, for cocking the pistol he put the barrel into his mouth and pulled the trigger. Snap! the cap did not explode. Again pulling back the hammer, he renewed the cap, and made a second attempt with the like result.

"D— the pistol !" said he, hurling it at his own reflection in the glass, which it shivered to atoms ; he was about to return for its companion when he heard a footstep approaching. He had just time to recover and conceal the weapon he had thrown away, when the housekeeper made her appearance.

Muttering something which the woman could not understand, he returned to the morning room ; while the servant stared speechless at the shattered mirror, not altogether incorrectly believing that her master was mad.

Resuming his seat in the arm-chair, probably not altogether sorry that to the dampness of a modicum of chemical paste he was indebted for existence, he remained absorbed in reverie for some hours, no one daring to approach the room.

Before it grew dark he placed another bottle of wine at his elbow, of which he constantly partook till he finished it, without eating even a biscuit ; any solid food would have choked him.

At length he felt drowsy, and closing his eyes he fell into a deep sleep. When he awoke he was in darkness, and touching the spring of his repeater he found it was half-past-two. The effect of the wine had passed off, and re-action setting in he became depressed, a state even more miserable than tempestuous rage. If a few hours before life had been a torment, now it became a load, an insupportable burden. Again the idea of suicide occurred ; again he determined to accomplish self-destruction, but this time by drowning.

The window opened upon the terrace which overlooked the moat. Locking the door behind him, he gently undid the fastenings of the sash, and raised it sufficiently high to enable him to get out.

The terrace ran round two sides of the house, abutting on the moat on the south side, and overlooking the flower-garden on the west, where it terminated in a flight of steps.

Cautiously treading on the gravel, he approached the castellated parapet above the water. The moon had just risen, and cast her rays along the south wall. He started! a dark form turned the angle of the house, coming from the garden. "Good G—! what is it?" he exclaimed. "There are no ghosts!" The light fell upon the advancing figure, it was a woman's. His flesh crept—he was not generally a coward, yet he stared like one paralyzed with fear.

The figure stopped—evidently he was observed for the first time; his back was to the moon—now he turned, and his face became visible. The figure no longer hesitated, but came forward quickly, saying in a low, sweet voice, "Edward! my Edward!"

Of all beings in existence at that moment, none could have been so hateful to him as Zizzi; she it was who stood before him.

All the rage of the morning returning with increased fury, he poured forth a string of maledictions; his habitual caution, however, did not desert him, therefore he spoke in a low tone, lest he might be overheard.

"You here!" said he; "what fiend has sent you to

torment me ? You, whom I took from a fisher's hut, on whom I have lavished wealth, care, and love, to turn upon me as you have done ! Miserable traitor ! wretch ! I loathe you. Get hence from my sight while reason restrains me from laying hands upon you. As you have destroyed me, body and soul, so may destruction dog your steps, and every form of degradation defile you ! Go ! thou fiend, masked though you are in woman's form."

She heard him to the end, and for a while maintained silence. Then, extending her clasped hands, she said—"Edward, cast me not off ; leave the old world behind, and let us find happiness together in the new. We are now bound to each other by closer ties than man can forge. Who is there to love you but myself ? And oh, Edward ! never have I loved you so fervently as now."

"Fool !" said he. "Fly with you indeed ! you must be mad !"

"Mad !" she replied, "no, not mad ; but who has a right to your love but myself ?"

"Right to my love !" rejoined Levinge with a sneer,

"Yes, Edward, I claim the right of a wife to love you."

"Wife !" he echoed ; "you are no wife of mine thank fate for that !"

"Do not reject me, Edward, I implore you."

"Leave this place, and do not bandy words," said he, "or I will give you into the keeping of my grooms."

"I will not leave you then," she said. "Edward,

you are my husband by the laws of God and man !
—Have mercy on me.”

Her earnest appeal, instead of appeasing his rage, only served to augment it ; he mastered it, however, sufficiently to say, in a thick, hoarse voice—

“Hear me ! no legal marriage has ever taken place between us ; your scruples were satisfied by an invalid ceremony.”

“Edward, you mock me,” she said, attempting to embrace him ; but as she approached he thrust her back so violently that she fell against the wall.

Struck down—struck by his hand, it was more than her heart could bear ; she rose, staggered to her feet, then with a convulsive effort flung herself over the parapet.

END OF VOL. II.

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